DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 694 FL 024 021

AUTHOR Wales, M. L.
TITLE Margaret Howell: An Outstanding Teacher of English in the Workplace. Occasional Paper Number 14.
INSTITUTION Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-875-37001-3; ISSN-0155-0640
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 109p.
AVAILABLE FROM Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, Centre for Language Learning and Teaching, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland, 4350, Australia.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; English (Second Language); English Instruction; Foreign Countries; Foreign Nationals; Immigrants; *Language Teachers; Limited English Speaking; Second Language Instruction; Vocational English (Second Language)
IDENTIFIERS *Howell (Margaret)

ABSTRACT

This report highlights the career and accomplishments of Margaret Howell, an English teacher in Australia who was instrumental in the development of English language learning for non-native speakers in the workplace. Material used was gathered in 1986, 1989, and 1992 interviews before her death of cancer in 1992. A chronological account of her courses and a listing of issues to be faced in this area of English-as-a-Second-Language instruction are provided. She was originally a primary school teacher with a special interest in arts and crafts and college degrees in psychology and Italian. Her teaching approaches are detailed. Over her career, she taught in hospitals, in telecommunication companies and other multinational businesses, and hotels. Her teaching methodology was highlighted by an adult approach, a global, integrated approach; the full involvement of all levels of management; employee advancement; assisting the industry itself; and an active, flexible classroom. Appendixes include a listing of problems with English in the workplace, comments from employees; a report on a course with a telecommunications company; student reports on the course; and a tribute from colleagues. (Contains 11 references.) (NAV)

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APPLIED LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

ED 397 694

Margaret Howell: An Outstanding Teacher of English in the Workplace

M.L. Wales

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The *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* is the journal of the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, and is published twice each year. Articles on any topic of relevance may be submitted to the editor at any time. Such articles should follow the conventions set out in the style sheet in this edition. Enquiries regarding advertising in the journal should be directed to the editor.

Printed by ANU Printing Services

APPLIED LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

MARGARET HOWELL: AN OUTSTANDING TEACHER OF ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE

M.L. Wales

Occasional Paper Number 14

1994
ISBN 1 875 37001 3
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INTRODUCTION

In 1983 I was asked by Dr. T.J. Quinn, then Director of The Horwood Language centre at The University of Melbourne, to assist him in a research project which had been commissioned by the Victorian Minister of Transport. The brief was to investigate the English language needs of immigrant workers in the Victorian Transport Authorities. Thus began my involvement with The English on the Job Project, and in consequence a 10 year association with the Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES) of Victoria.

In 1984, our report recommendations (Quinn and Wales 1983) having been accepted by the Minister, a new program of English language provision was initiated in which the teaching team was made up of instructors from AMES and the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) colleges of Footscray and Preston. I was asked to co-ordinate the teaching team and it was in the year that I did so that I learned a great deal at ground and at higher levels about the whole process of teaching English in the workplace.

Above all I learned that English in the Workplace is a peculiarly difficult pedagogical setting and that, as a result, to be a successful workplace ESL instructor one required a wide range of high-calibre qualities. Among these I would list considerable intelligence, perception and ingenuity, highly developed professional and creative skills, negotiating and counselling abilities and an unswerving commitment to triggering the language learning process in adult learners. The instructors with whom it was my privilege to work in 1984-1985 had these qualities in good measure, and I came to admire their work very much, particularly their singleness of purpose in seeking to meet the learning needs of their students. Margaret Howell, the subject of this paper was not one of the instructors supplied by AMES to be part of that team. However, I heard her name mentioned and realised that she was highly regarded by her professional colleagues at AMES.

My work for The English on the Job Project ended in mid 1985; however, in 1986 I was asked by Federal Telecom to undertake a report, similar to that of Quinn and Wales (1983), on the need for and provision of English language training in Telecom. This time the project was to include a pilot program which might be developed as a national model.

This was my opportunity to meet Margaret for the first time, as she was not only the most experienced AMES instructor working with Telecom, but she had been in many ways instrumental in initiating the project and was to be one of the two instructors in the pilot program. Margaret was in fact " a walking encyclopaedia " on the subject of ESL in Telecom Victoria, and the subsequent report (Wales 1986) owed much to her generosity in being willing to share her knowledge, insight and experience.

In 1989 I wrote a report, commissioned by AMES, documenting the work of its English in the Workplace section. Amongst other investigative activities undertaken for the report I was able to interview 14 workplace instructors about their work in different venues and about what they had learned over the years about teaching in workplace programs. These interviews were presented in the report as teacher profiles (Wales 1989). Margaret was among the instructors interviewed and this gave me a further opportunity to learn about her work.

In 1992 I heard that Margaret had terminal cancer. It seemed a good idea amongst her colleagues to produce a description of her work, which we all regarded as outstanding of its kind, so that she could be remembered in a way that she would appreciate, namely in a way that would perhaps benefit the profession. I add the word "perhaps" deliberately, since Margaret was a most unassuming colleague who could not be persuaded that she had ever done anything out of the ordinary. I was able to interview her one last time, in July 1992, together with her colleague Jean De Neef, with whom she had taught on her last courses. Margaret died in September of that year.

The material used for the paper was gathered for the 1986 and 1989 reports referred to above, and also in the 1992 interview. The first sections will give a chronological account of the kinds of courses on which Margaret taught , also providing an introduction to some of the issues that must be faced in workplace teaching, and the later sections will describe Margaret's teaching approaches in greater detail.

EARLIER PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

Margaret's earlier career was as a generalist primary school teacher with a special interest in art and craft. After taking a degree in which she majored in psychology and Italian, she joined AMES in 1979, working from the outset in the industrial sphere. Her major work in English in the Workplace (EWP) was with Telecom where she worked for ten years, but during that period she also taught at other venues, including:

- The Epworth, Alfred and Repatriation Hospitals
- Nielsen Porcelain
- Dunlop, and also Olympic
- The Hilton Hotel
- Brake and Clutch Industry
- Rheem Industrial Packaging.

The two final courses on which she taught were at The Australian Taxation Office (at Dandenong) and at Brake and Clutch, and on these she engaged in team teaching with Jean De Neef. In the next sections there will be a description of some courses which Margaret selected for particular comment in the 1989 interview, followed by a more substantial discussion of the work at Telecom.

THE HOSPITALS

Margaret taught some general English courses in hospitals, and also some special safety courses (at the Alfred for example) which she found particularly interesting for the following reason. Although hospital staff had received training courses, when asked by ESL instructors to carry out practical safety procedures, they revealed that they had understood very little of the instruction received on such courses. For example, staff did not have the skills needed to use the telephone in order to report a fire in a specific area, and on one occasion when a purple alert was broadcast – which indicated total evacuation because of a bomb – all staff

wearing purple uniforms vacated the buildings, while all catering staff remained, because they wore orange uniforms.

One of the hospital managers had declared that there was no need for English language training in relation to safety procedures. However when he accompanied the ESL instructors as they ran the practical tests on a random sample of hospital staff, he perceived the percentage of errors and misunderstandings, and the need for the course was established. With the help of the professional experts in the hospital a practical course was devised, Margaret facilitating the delivery of the information.

One major source of misunderstanding on the part of non English speaking background (NESB) employees seemed to be that much of the language used by experts in particular areas was too technical for them. Terms such as *combustibles*, *do not perforate*, or *this is inflammable* were not understood even by the most advanced students in Margaret's class. The language of the safety manuals at the Alfred also presented difficulties. For instance, when Margaret asked students the meaning of the instruction *State location and nature of fire* , they assumed that *state* had something to do with Victoria, or Queensland. Only one member of the class had some idea of the word *location*, and no-one knew what *nature of fire* might mean. This latter was, however, a standard phrase in all fire procedure information.

It transpired that the trainers responsible for the safety programs were totally unaware of the fact that these and other words and phrases were not understood by the NESB staff that they had trained.

For a variety of reasons, then, not only had many NESB employees not understood their training, but also, the trainers in the hospital had not realised that this was the case.

THE HILTON

Up to the early 1980s workplace ESL programs often suffered from restrictions on course length, generally being only 36 hours in duration. Instructors and learners alike were dissatisfied with this situation. If certain conditions could be obtained, however, even a short course of 30 hours, distributed in weekly one hour sessions, could prove effective. An example of this situation was the work that Margaret undertook at the

Hilton. She taught two courses there, one for catering staff, waiters etc., and the other for the domestic staff who looked after the guests' rooms.

The training officer at the Hilton was interested in women's issues and in imaginative approaches to staff development. She had become aware of communication difficulties and embarrassment that the domestic staff, most of whom were from Chile, were experiencing.

In the course for domestic staff Margaret adopted two related strategies which proved effective. The first involved using the workplace for authentic practice. Thus, after helping the staff to practise all the English they needed for making telephone calls, Margaret then got them to ring down to the actual person they would normally contact on the job.

The second strategy involved setting up authentic practice to take place outside class hours. Margaret would leave available the formats she had devised for the course and the supervisors read them, thus knowing exactly what English the staff had been learning. When the staff came to the supervisors' desks, they would be assisted to practise the formats, and thus have their learning checked, or extended. Similarly, when staff rang for sheets etc, the supervisors encouraged them to use the English they had been learning. Because of this involvement of the supervisors, even though the course was so brief the students received considerable practice in between classes, so that in effect a 30 hour course was expanded to 90 or 100 hours.

In addition to the supervisors' contribution, Margaret also noted the relaxed atmosphere of the classes, which were held in the best suites, there being no training room at the Hilton. It was possible to ring down for afternoon tea, which added to the comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. It was factors such as the conducive atmosphere, the practical nature of the course, the active support of supervisors and the practice this provided that contributed to what was in Margaret's view a remarkably successful course, despite its brevity.

NIELSEN PORCELAIN

This company manufactured by hand the huge porcelain insulators that encase electric cables on pylons, and in her description Margaret related first that the factory was probably the most exciting place in which she had worked. There was a range of kilns – from ancient to modern – and

a variety of processes occurring, as items went in and out of kilns. A second point she made was that, as a field of pottery making, the porcelain insulator industry had a whole language of its own.

Employees were from all over the world, and Margaret undertook a number of 36 hour courses whose purpose was to help increase the level of English in the workplace and to improve communication flow both up and down throughout the organisation. The classroom was in the middle of the factory and Margaret used this fact to engage again in authentic language practice. The students would learn, for example, the language of requests, such as "Could I have some more clay, please?" and then the whole group would go out and practise their requests on the factory floor itself. Management was very co-operative, and all employees in the factory became involved in the English learning task. The first course at Nielsen was a pilot course and in the light of its success other courses were requested.

WORKPLACE PROGRAMS IN THE 70S AND 80S

IMMIGRATION AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

In the next section we come to a review of Margaret's work in Telecom. This work needs to be seen, however, in the context of workplace English programs more generally before and during Margaret's time at Telecom, so that her contribution can be more clearly understood. The programs themselves need to be considered in the context of the language difficulties they were seeking to address.

The years following the Second World War saw an expansion of Australian industry, bringing about a government policy of encouraging immigration, in order to acquire the necessary increased workforce. Many NESB immigrants (mainly from Europe, especially Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia) came to Australia in those years. In subsequent years immigrants have also come from many other parts of the world, including South America, Cambodia, Lebanon, Turkey, China and Vietnam.

The coincidence of lack of English and the urgent need to find employment has meant that NESB immigrant workers are generally concentrated in the unskilled or semi-skilled sections of the workforce. Those immigrating earlier, the long-term residents in Australia, have usually remained in these sections ever since. In many cases members of this group, who would have emigrated because of war and economic hardship, had had minimal schooling in their country of origin, and some were illiterate in their first language. More recent arrivals, particularly those who emigrated because of political turmoil, could be well qualified in their country of origin, but may have been forced to take lower positions because of the language problem, or because their qualifications were not recognised in Australia, or both.

Early government provision of English was in the form of shipboard classes, followed by evening classes based at the immigrant hostels in Australia. Later there developed the three month on-arrival classes based at the hostels and on-going provision of various kinds. Immigrants in the workforce, however, have generally not been able to participate very much in such provision, due to obstacles such as fatigue and family responsibilities. Family life is conducted naturally in the first language, especially where elderly relatives have joined their families

under the Family Reunion scheme. Where strong local ethnic communities have developed it is possible to live most of one's life in Australia without using English. Thus, while child immigrants and second-generation immigrants become fluent English speakers, it has been very difficult for adult immigrants in the workforce to have access to native speaker input of English or to English classes.

Access to English has been frequently just as difficult at work where employers, faced with the problem of a multilingualism in the workplace which did not include English, may have resorted to recruiting or rostering on a linguistic basis, so that whole areas or gangs could be solely Greek speaking or Italian speaking. Workers were thus confined within a so-called linguistic ghetto. In some situations communication between NESB workers and English speakers was often too sparse to have any effect upon second language development. However, in many situations English was needed in the workplace and the language barrier created serious communication problems.

ATTITUDES IN THE WORKPLACE

Hostile attitudes could be engendered in the workplace by a language barrier. Working under pressure not just to maintain productivity levels but to increase them whilst retaining quality, and working with a whole range of potential hazards (heavy machinery, great heat, dangerous chemicals, electric cables, treacherous outdoor conditions etc.), those engaged in manual work of various kinds, upon which much industrial productivity depended, stood in need of better communication on the job than those in many other work areas. Yet those manual areas were exactly where the NESB employees were concentrated. Poor communication exacerbated the pressures already felt, with unfortunate results. Supervisors' attitudes and those of English speaking co-workers could range from prejudice and racism on the one hand to justifiable frustration and weariness on the other. The view was often taken that immigrant workers had a responsibility to learn English after working hours, and that their failure to do so indicated their lack of commitment to the job, to their workmates and perhaps ultimately to Australia itself.

A less hostile attitude which could be found was the paternalistic. Observing mistakes or confusion in an immigrant employee's work performance could lead other staff or the supervisor to the conclusion that

s/he was simply not very intelligent, but must be tolerated, and that all concerned must somehow work out a way of coping with the situation. The usual ways of coping were to have as little communication as possible, to employ reduced forms of English where communication was absolutely necessary (the factory pidgin, see Clyne 1977), or, as noted above, to establish gangs on a linguistic basis with a leader whose English was better than that of the others.

All of this tended to increase what Schumann (1978) called the social and psychological distance between the immigrant second language learner and speakers of the target language. Psychological distance in workplace settings seemed to involve alienation and suspicion on both sides. For their part immigrant employees were naturally humiliated at being reduced in spoken and written language to a child's level of performance, and at being treated as if they were children. In their first language, of course, they were not only adult, but in most cases capable and enterprising – witness the fact that they had emigrated to a country with a different language and had survived. When functioning in English, not only did they fail to meet the expectations of others in the workplace, but they did not meet their own standards. As a result, they often lost confidence, felt extremely anxious, nursed grievances and were generally low in morale.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH CLASSES

In the seventies, as an answer to the problems caused by lack of English in the workplace, the Federal Adult Migrant Education Program provided Industrial Language Training through its state branches (AMES), whereby ESL classes could be conducted actually on the work sites. AMES provided the instructors, but management had to meet the cost of work-release and provide accommodation. Stemming largely from the work-release factor, but also from a number of misperceptions in industry as to how language is best learnt, the ESL programs operated under a number of constraints. The following generalisations characterise program provision for the period up to 1983-84.

- ESL instructors went in at the commission of management where the latter had perceived a language problem serious enough to warrant the cost of seeking a remedy.

- Course-content was therefore tied, in the main, to the work-related problems perceived by management.
- Participants were nominated for courses by their supervisors.
- Information about courses was thus not generally available.
- Class groups, being nominated by supervisors, would contain different levels of competence in the various language skills, and members would be participating for reasons decided by their supervisors.
- Actual attendance at classes was conditional upon the demands of the work schedule – i.e. work-release might be refused altogether, or on any particular day – and on the goodwill of local and/or lower management.
- Courses were usually of 36 or 48 hours in duration, e.g. 6 to 8 weeks of 2 x 3 hours per week.
- More often than not employees received just one course.
- If more than one course was received there was often a considerable time lag between courses.

As will be readily perceived these constraints were frustrating to instructors and learners alike.

What were the characteristic attitudes in industry towards English classes in the workplace? The belief that immigrant employees were not intelligent enough or motivated enough to learn English prompted some, perhaps many, supervisors and staff to dismiss the notion as a complete waste of time. When it was further suggested that classes should take place during working hours, and that no extra manpower or overtime money would be made available, to cover the employees' absence, the notion was then seen as a totally insupportable waste of time and could be resisted strongly, either by initial outright refusal to co-operate, or by the adoption of various other means to prevent attendance or inhibit the process.

Some supervisors, on the other hand, wholly supported the scheme, believing that a solution must be found to the communication problems in the workplace that went beyond merely coping. Moreover, there were a number of supervisors (and staff) who saw beyond the language barrier, realising the talent that lay in some of their immigrant workers, and who actively supported any moves that were made to enable such staff to

realise their potential, and get the promotion they deserved. These supervisors saw English classes as an obvious part of staff development. Even those who supported the idea of English classes, however, pointed to the severe difficulties encountered in trying to meet production targets while understaffed.

Immigrant employees themselves also varied in their reactions to the idea of English classes. In some, lack of confidence and low morale was so pronounced that although they would dearly like to master the language they did not believe that they could learn. Others, having had a negative experience of English classes, believed like many supervisors, that they were a waste of time. Still others were very enthusiastic, regarding classes as a great opportunity to solve all their language problems. Not surprisingly, as it is a specialist area, very little was known by managers or staff about what was involved in language learning, and expectations as to the outcomes of courses were invariably unrealistic. Management tended to believe it was being exceptionally generous in allowing courses of 36 or 48 hours, and the expectation on the part of hard-pressed supervisors was that employees would return with noticeable improvements in their communicative skills. Enthusiastic immigrant staff also expected to make great strides with their English during the course. If no visible improvement was observed, this reinforced the conviction on all sides that English classes were a waste of time.

THE ENGLISH ON THE JOB PROJECT

Dissatisfaction with the conditions and/or the results of English programs in workplace settings was expressed from time to time in instructors' reports, and by students, unionists and supervisors. The concern was that under prevailing conditions, the ESL programs were not succeeding in any lasting way in helping immigrant employees to function more effectively in English, and that the whole enterprise needed to be tackled in a more radical fashion. It was lobbying, prompted by this concern, that led to the 1983 investigation (Quinn and Wales) into the English language needs of immigrant workers in the Victorian Transport Authorities. The ensuing report recommended a needs-based, learner-centred approach to curriculum, to accommodate the wide-ranging needs for English

expressed by the 200 immigrants who were interviewed. The ensuing program was implemented with the following conditions.

- A fundamental principle of English on the Job (EOJ) was the tripartite co-operation of unions, management and course providers at all stages and levels of implementation.
- This co-operation began with agreements between the three parties at the highest levels as to the nature of the project, the procedures for implementation and the role to be assumed by each party. These agreements pledged the co-operation of all levels in the respective institutions.
- The project was then steered by a management committee consisting of representatives of the three parties.
- The actual mounting of courses was a joint responsibility of management, unions and course providers at the local level.
- It followed from the above features that effective communication within each institution was a critical element. Agreement, authorisation and procedural decisions must first be generated by the top-level committee and then communicated through intervening levels to the local level.
- All employees were entitled to information about the project.
- All employees whose first language was not English were entitled to work-release without loss of pay, in order to attend English classes.
- Participation in classes was to be voluntary. Employees themselves should decide whether or not they wished to participate.
- The mounting of courses was to proceed as follows:
    - Management and unions were to co-operate in informing employees about the scheme, making lists of volunteers to be interviewed and organising interview times.
    - Course providers would send instructors to the workplace to interview all prospective students. The students would be grouped in classes according to their levels of ability and the type of class they requested.

- Each course was to be a minimum of 100 hours, these hours being distributed weekly according to negotiated agreement between management, unions and course providers.
- Since 100 hours, in the majority of cases, could not provide all that was needed it was assumed that students would proceed to further courses until they reached a satisfactory level of competence.
- It was the responsibility of management, in consultation with unions and course providers, to supply suitable accommodation, facilities and equipment for the classes.
- A final point, which developed during implementation, was the need for centralised classes, drawing participants of similar needs and levels from all sections of the workforce, rather than from just one section at a time. Such centralisation was found to be a considerable relief to the pressures of work-release, and to provide greater scope for well-matched groups.

The English on the Job Project was thus a new model of English language provision in the workplace at that time, endeavouring to meet learner needs as effectively as possible, given workplace learning conditions. While this model was being developed in the Transport Authorities, changes of a similar kind were taking place in Telecom, largely due to the work of Margaret Howell.

TELECOM

PROVISIONS AND CONCERNS

Many of Margaret's approaches to teaching ESL in industry were developed in her long association with Telecom. At the time that I worked with Margaret in 1986 The Telecommunications Commission was the second largest employer in Australia (after Coles Myer) and a cautious estimate of its Victorian work force in 1986 indicated that over 20% of employees were NESB. (This figure reflects that usually given for the percentage of NESB employees in the Australian workforce overall). Over half the NESB employees identified in the estimate appeared to be concentrated in Engineering and Operations, for the most part in base-grade positions.

From the late 1970s onwards Telecom Australia, in particular its Victorian and New South Wales administrations, was associated with AMES (or on occasion with TAFE colleges) in providing programs of English Language Training for immigrant employees. Margaret herself began work at Telecom in 1980 and subsequently taught over the next 10 years at numerous locations, including some centralised classes in Cromwell House in the City.

An account of the association with AMES, from the perspective of Telecom management, can be found in the submission by Telecom to the Adult Migrant Education Program Review in 1985. The impression conveyed by the submission was that, with a few minor modifications suggested by Telecom, the programs would continue in their existing form, since the Commission was satisfied that it was meeting the current educational needs of its immigrant employees. As an ESL instructor with much experience of the Commission and the situation of its immigrant employees, Margaret was of the opinion that the existing arrangements for English language programs were not adequately covering the needs of employer or employees. She had given a great deal of thought to the kinds of measures that she thought were needed in Telecom to improve ESL program delivery in the interests of all parties.

Two issues that she saw as needing to be addressed were publicity and work release. The English Language Training Program in Telecom Victoria was supervised from 1979 to December 1985 by Staff Development which publicised the service by means of a circular sent

out to the Districts. However Margaret felt that greater promotion of the program was needed, to support Staff Development, as the circulars sometimes were discarded by managers who did not see the program as important. As a result many immigrant employees simply did not know of the program's existence. For example, in 1985 workers in Ivanhoe were found not to know of the existence of classes, even though classes had been held three times in that district since 1978. In fact information about classes was also unknown to some top levels of management. Where the circular *was* received, requests for classes came from supervisors or sometimes from staff themselves.

In general classes were dependent upon local management seeing a need for them, and were locally based. Participants tended to be nominated by supervisors. Because of this, and because of being drawn from the limited numbers of single locations, the class groups would contain very disparate levels in the macroskills, and often members' reasons for participating would vary considerably.

Work-release for classes was dependent upon availability of staff to cover the work, or upon the goodwill of local management. Thus managers might initially agree to classes but then later change their minds, simply reneging on an agreement to release. In other situations, a change of manager might mean the end of a release agreement. Sometimes work-release was just refused outright to those who asked to attend classes, or sometimes supervisors signed employees' applications but middle management blocked release. Alternatively a change of supervisor could mean that students were denied classes after a previous agreement that they could attend (or if work were demanding they might not be allowed to leave on any particular day). In such cases potential students were usually unable to bring themselves to reapply because it took considerable courage to admit their need and put in an application.

Other problems that Margaret noted were insufficient course length, lack of relation between English language programs and the rest of in-house training in Telecom, lack of assessment of client needs and an absence of policy. Courses, as noted above for workplace programs generally at this time, were usually of 36 hours or 48 hours' duration and more often than not students received only one course. Where a second course was received there was often a considerable time-gap between courses.

With regard to staff training, the changes to which Telecom had been exposed in recent years had involved redeployment and retraining but these had not been allied to English language programs, which had meant an under-utilisation of human resources in the industry. For example, some NESB staff nominated by their supervisors to attend training courses had not been accepted, or had had to drop out, because of their lack of English.

It was a cause of concern to Margaret that client needs within Telecom Victoria had never been comprehensively assessed, and indeed that the numbers and locations of NESB employees had never been documented in detail so that such assessment could be made.

As we have seen in Chapter 2 – and as Margaret would readily have agreed – in all these various descriptions and concerns Telecom merely exemplified the situations and difficulties encountered in the workplace more generally by those seeking to promote English language instruction. Within Telecom as elsewhere there were also enlightened individual managers and other personnel who saw the potential of improved English language skills. Margaret spoke warmly of a number of such individuals in Telecom who had put much effort into supporting English programs.

Over the years she had herself amassed comprehensive data on the English language needs of a range of NESB employees in Telecom, so that she was in a position to outline many general problems that affected both the Commission and its employees, and also more specific problems relating to particular target groups.

PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH

Some recurring problems that Margaret documented in her reports were:

- an inability on employees' part to fill in items such as leave forms, petty cash vouchers, or log-books, or to use standard Telecom systems of reporting;
- not knowing the alphabet in English so that they could not take down street names, for example, if customers spelled them;
- mispronunciation;
- confusion on the telephone both in talking to customers and to supervisors; loss of time through having to phone supervisors because of confusion with customers;

- reticence in answering the telephone at all, in the Workshops for example, because of problems of misunderstanding:
- a lack of confidence and a need for communicative assertiveness.

These observations were corroborated in the data Margaret had collected from employees themselves during her courses, and in the data that I myself gathered from managers and supervisors in the 1986 Telecom project (see Appendix A for examples). At that time I asked Margaret to describe the English language situation in Telecom in terms of the different target groups she could identify, the problems they faced and the kind of help they needed. She gave the following description, based on her experience of the industry:

TARGET GROUPS

1 The Lowest Level – Hardly any English at all

In this category Margaret identified the cleaners, who worked anywhere that Telecom had a building. Very few cleaners ever attended English classes. Those who did participate seemed to fall into two main categories. The first were those who had become supervisors and so needed literacy because they had to fill in forms and write reports. They also required organisational skills in order to manage teams of workers. A suitable course for this group would provide basic literacy with some oracy. A second group would be the isolated cleaners who, for example, worked alone in an exchange or depot and so had to mix in the close-knit community of the exchange. They might experience difficulty communicating, for example with technicians, and so a course for them would focus upon expanded oral skills. (In some parts of Telecom contract-cleaners were hired, who worked in the evenings, and might need assistance with English in the area of safety regulations.)

2 Survival Speech – But not Literate

The linesmen of External Plant fell into this category. They could cope with necessities in English but had difficulty conversing with customers.

Mostly these employees were of Italian, Greek, or Macedonian background and had been in Australia 20 to 30 years. A major problem for this group of linesmen was that customers had difficulty communicating with them when they were working on their property, and the linesmen in turn became flustered. The problem was compounded when the customer's first language was not English and was not that of the linesman.

Linesmen worked in extremely hazardous conditions, amidst ditches, machinery, electric cables, and gas pipes, and of course the situation was more dangerous when wet weather created slippery conditions. There were many accidents involving man-holes. Safety regulations were thus extremely important, and the literacy skills needed to comprehend them. Lack of literacy was itself a hazard when the men could not read plans and so did not know where the gas pipes and SEC cables were.

Without English there was no career path for such employees because further training was impossible, so morale could be very low. This in turn could lead to a high incidence of large compensation claims and exits, which was very expensive for Telecom, or alternatively to the seeking of additional employment outside, in lieu of promoted positions and higher pay, loyalty to Telecom having dwindled through lack of incentive. Often such employees felt dissatisfied that they had been passed over. They usually wanted a writing class, and in the instructor's estimation, also needed help with reading although they seldom linked these two. They might not see themselves as needing help with speech, and their supervisors might not realise the problems they had with customers.

Also in this category Margaret placed some assistant technicians who came in as labourers in the 60s and 70s and thus were an older group among assistant technicians.

Many process workers in Workshops, especially in the machine-shop had low oracy and no literacy, although they would in general be a younger group. They wanted to improve their English because of better job possibilities. An RMIT survey on quality circles carried out at Workshops had revealed low morale, low productivity, an enormous accident rate and inter-racial tension.

Similarly, there were groups of workers in Mechanical Aids who needed help in all language skills, had very low morale, and tended to

take on other additional work or leave. Mechanical Aids seemed to be particularly beset with EEO problems.

Some amongst the linesmen had tried to improve their English by attending evening-classes but reported negative experiences such as groups having disparate levels. This tended to increase their despondency.

3 Limited Speaking Skills – But Literate in English

This was quite a different group. There was a small population of recent arrivals who fell into two groups. The first were highly trained technical personnel, imported because they had special skills, to work for example in research or in engineering. Some of these had applied either personally or through Personnel for courses in English.

The second group could be found, for example, in Workshops. They had some 14 or 15 years' education, and could have been teachers, physiotherapists, nurses etc. in their country of origin. Some had worked in telecommunications – in Poland or Russia, for example – and one had been in charge of a whole exchange in Poland, but was working in Telecom not as an engineer but as a technician. This was characteristic, namely that such immigrants were usually employed here as process workers or production assistants because of limited spoken English, since the tests for aptitude would be prohibitive. Some technicians were working as assistant technicians. (They were often learning English in their own time). Even working as assistant technicians was difficult because of the problem of talking on telephones. In exchange work the customer's requests about connections, disconnections or faults, were referred to the exchange by telephone, and information also had to be phoned in from the field. Thus assistant technicians had to use the telephone in their work and for these situations the employees described above simply did not have the English skills. Margaret often acted as a consultant, advising on the best place for a particular worker until his/her language skills increased.

4 Intermediate to Advanced Level

There were many in this category and the group consisted largely of younger assistant technicians (in their 30s and 40s). They were good

skilled operators, held in high regard by all colleagues, but were held back because they could not pass the screening to get bridging training. They needed to take courses at TAFE but an intermediate step was needed to get them into the TAFE courses. They could be found, for example, in the big exchanges in the City, in Commercial, in Engineering or in Operations.

Many immigrants of real ability performed poorly at interviews, the result being often that the job went to someone less skilled than themselves whom they then had to help. This could happen even when the supervisor really wanted them to get the job. They were also completely unaware, in most cases, of the structure of Telecom's organisation, their conditions of employment, their rights, and the procedures to obtain them. They were ignorant of procedures in applying for promotion, and of what the cultural norms were for interviews in Australia. Furthermore, they did not have the same access to information that an English speaker had. Even the booklet on employees' rights was less useful for those who did not understand bureaucratic English.

Promotion was highly valued in Telecom's culture, so a knowledge of the procedures was important, but immigrant employees probably did not realise how much information they lacked, because they were not able to use colleagues as a resource to share information, or to use interviews as practice for later bids. They were also frequently unaware of or intimidated by the appeals system. There needed to be a liaison between English language training and general staff development training.

These descriptions serve to illustrate both the extensive knowledge that Margaret had of the immigrant groups in Telecom and also her professional concern and insight. The many and complex issues which she perceived led her to the view that Telecom needed an official language policy which would ensure a comprehensive and effective ESL program related to the rest of the Commission's training needs, and she worked for some years to try to achieve such a policy.

FOOTSCRAY: NEEDS ANALYSIS, GROUPING AND MANAGEMENT PARTICIPATION

Towards the mid-eighties Margaret began to see some changes in the kinds of program structure that had prevailed in Telecom and which were

described earlier. Late in 1984 she held a workshop in the Footscray District in which she elicited from the employees themselves what their problems with English were. They agreed that they wanted a course in written English and she went on to establish what kinds of writing were needed and at what levels. The top level group were referred to TAFE and Margaret took a second group for a writing course, with great success.

A feature of this course was the interest and participation of the District Manager. Through conversation with him in class the men realised that they could actually try for promotion. At Margaret's advice they went on after the ESL course to undertake a TAFE course in their own time, and all applied for promotion and training. As a result of the manager's participation in the course the men began to perceive him as a friend. They also perceived their own right to pursue an upward track in Telecom. These factors strengthened their loyalty to the Commission.

Unfortunately Footscray also provided an example of the need for a language policy. Initially the course was to be 60 hours in duration, but at the 30 hour mark cuts in manpower occurred, Footscray losing 20 linesmen, so that the students could no longer be released for the class. After painstaking negotiation with higher management Margaret retained a small group who were allowed to continue.

Important features of the program at Footscray were the establishing of employees' own perceptions of their English language needs and the planning of the courses in accordance with these perceptions, the formation of groups in accordance with general level of English language skills, and the significant role of management participation.

WORKSHOPS: 100 HOUR COURSE AND TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE

In 1985-1986 Margaret ran a course at the South Melbourne Workshops, the program structure being very similar in a number of respects to the EOJ model. Initial discussions were held in July 1985 between Margaret, the Superintending Engineer of Services Branch, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator, as the project represented part of Telecom Victoria's Affirmative Action Initiatives.

Subsequently 14 employees were nominated by their supervisors to attend an ESL course, each employee being individually interviewed

and assessed in order that language needs and levels in the macro-skills could be ascertained. The group received a course of 100 hours' duration (2 x 3 hour sessions over 17 weeks) and a monitoring committee (on which students were represented as well as different levels of management and the teacher) oversaw the implementation and evaluation of benefits.

To judge from the teachers' report, post-course comments of students, and the observations of management, the course at Workshops was an outstanding success. Important features that led to its success were the longer course duration, and the active participation of management, course providers, and students themselves in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. Some significant details in program implementation were the information sessions for supervisors on language and culture (provided by AMES), assistance with administration from Services Branch, and the provision of Publicity Posters to advise all staff in Workshops about what was happening.

An agreement was negotiated that if the students who had completed the course provided evidence that they had continued to study English in their own time, a second 100 hour course would be provided for them by Telecom. The 100 hour length course, and the co-operative arrangement between management, course providers and students in mounting the program were features in which the course at Workshops resembled EOJ. Two respects in which it differed were that the group was not sufficiently homogeneous (a point noted in the teachers' evaluation), and that the students were nominated by their supervisors, not by themselves.

It was clear that senior management in the Engineering Department had seen the value and benefits of improved quality of English language provision at South Melbourne Workshops. Without a language policy that applied across the whole of Telecom, however, even such excellent programs as this were in danger should there be changes in management personnel, since their continuation depended on the benevolence of management rather than on a policy agreement.

COBURG AND IVANHOE: AN EOJ MODEL

After the launching of the Equal Employment Opportunity Program in Telecom, Margaret and the EEO State Coordinator liaised in an effort

to get Federal Telecom to establish an overall policy for English language provision which would ensure that access to such provision, and hence to the benefits that accrued from it, was equal across the organisation and not reliant solely upon the interest of individual managers. Federal Telecom, approached also by representatives of the APTU, agreed to fund a project in which a researcher would investigate and report on:

a. The nature and extent of current English language training provided to NESB staff in Telecom.
b. The outcomes of pilot English language courses.
c. Any consequential changes that might be necessary in the objectives and manner of delivery of English Language Training for NESB staff in Telecom.
d. A proposed national policy for English language training for Telecom staff.

This was the project referred to above (Wales 1986) in which I was privileged to work with Margaret and it was during this investigation that I learned of her invaluable and dedicated work in the Telecom organisation. Essentially, a small EOJ model was established in the Coburg and Ivanhoe Districts, Margaret being the teacher at Ivanhoe. The classes ran for two hours a day from 28th May to August 1986. The features that distinguished them from previous provision were:

1. The two Districts were merged and all who volunteered for classes were interviewed so that maximum homogeneity of grouping could be attained. Although the venues were at Coburg and Ivanhoe the groups were formed not by District but by the language needs and skill levels of each member.
2. As with the course at Workshops the course length was 100 hours.
3. The longer course allowed greater scope for negotiation and learner-directed curriculum.
4. Most of the extremely hard organisational work in the workplace was undertaken by the local EEO officers.
5. Management, unions, course providers and EEO officers as well as the researcher all played a part in overseeing the program.

Despite much organisational difficulty and hardship both teachers were delighted with the learning that took place, and Margaret noted the benefits that came from having a group that was properly matched. Students also expressed their delight with the course and wanted more. Those on management who participated or took an interest all agreed about the effectiveness and benefits of the courses, even where they expressed concern about the cost in lost man hours. Margaret's report and some student comments I collected can be seen in Appendices B and C .

The report and its recommendations for a national policy, for which Margaret and the EEO Coordinator had worked so hard, was submitted in October 1986. Subsequently, however, Telecom was subject to great pressure with the constant possibility of deregulation and privatisation looming over the organisation. As a result no comprehensive action or adoption of a language policy seemed likely in the near future. As Margaret put it, however, the need for English language classes was as great as ever, certainly in every District in Victoria, and probably throughout Australia. Apart from the continuing needs of employees described earlier Margaret explained that it was now the responsibility of all managers to ensure that every staff member knew about the enormous change process that was taking place in Telecom. NESB employees would have particular difficulty in understanding, for example, the explanatory material on current changes issued by Headquarters.

STATE EXTERNAL PLANT: OUTSTANDING CONDITIONS

A most farsighted submission was received for the 1986 report from a manager in the State External Plant Construction who perceived the benefits that would accrue to employee and employer alike if some of his supervisors and staff could be helped to advance in the organisation through assistance with English. Subsequently he liaised with Margaret and she organised a program for that section.

Telecom had inaugurated a nation-wide project entitled "Vision 2000" which was designed to enable the whole organisation to see the resources which lay within the workforce itself and to be motivated to enlist those resources in the industry's corporate effort. The ESL program that Margaret mounted in State External Plant was part of a Vision 2000

development program for staff. It was thus part of a greater program to develop staff and to give them equal employment opportunities.

As a result Margaret noted that in this project she had received the greatest co-operation she believed it was possible for any teacher to receive. Supporting the program were the Principal Lines Officer, his External Plant Manager, the Superintending Engineer, and the Chief State Engineer. There was thus total co-operation throughout the entire managerial hierarchy, and everyone knew that interest was being taken in the program. Resources had been allocated to run the program, which made a huge difference compared with conditions previously experienced. Most importantly these resources covered work-release – the first time this had ever occurred.

Another important feature for success, in Margaret's view, was having a large enough pool from which to select a class. She pointed out how difficult it was for ESL programs when a group was very diverse in its language needs and in levels of proficiency in the macro- skills. The last group she had taught at State External Plant had consisted entirely of line supervisors. All had the same paperwork to tackle in their jobs, having to write the same kind of reports for example, and they shared the same problems. This made course content much easier to select, and meant that when outside speakers, such as managers, were brought in they could speak on issues that were of interest to the group as a whole.

Also in State External Plant Margaret received the opportunity for the first time ever to teach a second 100 hours in Telecom, and she noted the difference that could be observed in the students' ability to undertake needs analysis (they were able to do this on Day 1 of the second course) and to negotiate the curriculum. They seemed to be much clearer about what their needs for English were. During the second 100 hours' course staff demonstrated their improved learning strategies, and confidently and rapidly acquired new knowledge and skills.

EVIDENCE OF COST EFFECTIVENESS

A major and most significant benefit was experienced in this program. As employees on the courses talked with managers in class, communication in the workplace improved enormously. Discussing the situation that Telecom as an industry was facing, employees became impressed with the need for State External Plant to work competitively

as a contractor against other operations that might want to do its work. Such was the impact of this realisation, that although man-hours were lost while employees were on the course, in fact no man-hours were actually lost because so many jobs were completed ahead of target.

Management actually put this crucially important fact in writing and it was documented in the course report. This evidence that the returns from effectively run ESL programs could offset the costs was vitally important in the task of persuading managements to invest in the expense of providing the necessary conditions for successful learning, which as Margaret so often noted, involved the active and enthusiastic support of the whole managerial structure.

Moreover, while employees on previous courses that Margaret had undertaken in Telecom had gone on to further training and promotion, never before had such a high percentage of the class gone on to achieve further goals so quickly. For example, large numbers of those who completed courses went on immediately to gain extra qualifications through TAFE colleges, quite independently of Telecom. Thus employees obtained the necessary certificates to allow them to drive backhoes and other machines. This meant a lowering in costs for the laying of conduit.

The further training involved took place, Margaret believed, because management, being closely in touch with the ESL program, and keen to utilise its benefits, was able to contact those completing the course and ask them if they would like to go on to do something further. Management believed that the confidence and skills that employees had developed on their English courses had enabled them to take on further courses, to take responsibility for their own paperwork and to take promotion.

These programs were characterised therefore by what Margaret regarded as an essential ingredient for effective workplace English classes, namely managerial support, and better still managerial enthusiasm. Overall it seems that the conditions surrounding the ESL programs at State External Plant at Telecom exemplified many of the ideals for effective English language provision that were recommended in the EOJ model in the Transport Authorities and in the 1986 pilot program in Telecom. If information about the beneficial results of such good conditions of implementation were more generally available in industry, it would doubtless help management to take the language aspect in staff development more seriously.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

The material for this section is taken from the 1989 interview that Margaret gave for the AMES report (Wales 1989). It was difficult at first to persuade Margaret to talk about her teaching methods. She was quick to observe that her methods were no different from those practised by any other ESL teacher working with adults, and she described how she and her colleagues shared information about which methods worked and which did not, and how they helped each other with ideas for work on hand. Some of the description will therefore reflect what is recognised as good practice among workplace ESL instructors. Instructors are individuals, however, and the description will also reveal Margaret's particular teaching strengths. Here, then, is an account of Margaret's approach to teaching English in the Workplace based on the description in the 1989 report. (The material has been re-arranged and contains some additional comments where necessary.)

Reading through her reports and interview comments I sensed in Margaret's teaching a commitment to a number of principles, which I identified as follows. There was a commitment to:

1. **an adult approach**, of appreciating group members as fellow adults with interesting stories to tell, of discussing the organisation of the program, and issues such as learning techniques, in a way which emphasised the learners' adult status, and of engaging in authentic tasks and activities.
2. **a global, integrated approach**, which was reflected in class activities that could involve the whole individual, the whole group, all the macroskills, and work-related English interwoven with general English.
3. **the full involvement of all levels of management** in the planning and delivery of programs.
4. **employees' advancement** – in industry and also in life generally, – reflected, for example in the effort to encourage independent learning.

5. **assisting the industry itself** through the benefits that ESL classes could bring, reflected, for example in evaluating success through observations of improved workplace practice.
6. **an active flexible classroom** in which the participants had fun.

The following passages show aspects of Margaret's work, illustrated mainly from Telecom, and throughout these sections it is possible to see her commitment to these various principles influencing the approaches taken and interrelating with each other.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Earlier it was noted that in the second 100 hours at State External Plant Margaret had been able to conduct a needs analysis on the first day of the course because of the students' previous experience. On needs analysis generally, she noted that she always conducted one at some stage in the course but not necessarily at the outset. It was her practice in the preselection interviews to ask students what they wanted in the course, so as to plan as much as possible in advance, and she also liked to have a long preliminary discussion with management in order to ascertain its expectations.

If the group members had not been to school for a long time it was not always possible to have a needs analysis at the beginning of the course. In the first course at State External Plant, for example, Margaret did not try a needs analysis until about halfway through the course, after she had built up the learners' confidence, got them to be relaxed about returning to a classroom situation, and given them a taste of all the possible approaches, activities, etc. that they could do. In the needs analysis the group examined all the possible lines of study that individuals might wish to pursue and this examination was totally open ended. The topics could be any of the macroskills, for example, or any combination of the macroskills, or any goal that students wish to aim for, whether this was work related or related to private or personal life. The group members selected five items that they would particularly like to work on during the course, and then prioritised them.

Margaret weighed each item in order to arrive at the focus of the course, also feeding in aspects that managers had emphasised – although

quite often management's requests overlapped with students' stated needs. At times the course would in fact diverge from this agenda because something more interesting or important cropped up.

THE TASK-ORIENTED APPROACH

In Margaret's view the needs analysis was particularly useful for providing some practical goals that students (and often management) were hoping to achieve. For example, employees might wish to be able to use the phone, to deal politely with customers, or to have plenty of strategies to deal with emergencies (or all of these!). To help them achieve these goals she had developed a task-oriented approach to teaching. Thus in order to achieve the final goals, she would break each one down into a sequence of tasks that were related to building up the skills ultimately needed to achieve the final task.

Margaret was influenced in her development of task-oriented teaching by an observation by Michael Long (no reference mentioned) that curriculum should be based on tasks, and that there should be a lead-up to the goal task through a series of related tasks that eventually closely resembled an authentic task. As noted above she had already been able at the Hilton and at Nielsen Porcelain to utilise personnel and equipment within the workplace to provide authentic practice, deploying the workplace context in the learning process.

On the journey towards the final goal it was likely that much of what the class engaged in would be for fun, as language acquisition, in Margaret's view, was more likely to take place when people were relaxed and happy. Also activities might be related to the acquisition of general English, or they might just as easily be work related, such as actually phoning someone in the employee's own section.

Margaret observed that in fact she did a great deal of work involving telephone calls, improving students' listening skills and also much double-checking of information. These skills were developed through sequences of lessons. She often embarked upon the sequence by having the group play a whispering game. As the message was whispered from one player to the next the information was often misunderstood or indeed lost, and in comparing the initial and final forms of the message students had this point made clear to them. Margaret then taught them

how to double-check a message and how to paraphrase information that had been received.

She often used intensive listening activities such as having the class break up into groups of three where member A must receive a message from B and then report to C. Member B could then judge the accuracy of A's report and mention points that had been missed. Messages could be passed in both directions around the trio who could then judge how much had been lost in transmission etc.

The next phase would involve role play of telephone calls, the students at first sitting back to back, using handsets. Thereafter real telephones were used and, where possible, managers or other personnel were enlisted to phone in, in order that the exercise be as close as possible to the real workshop situation. In Workshops there were considerable communication problems because NESB employees were very intimidated by telephone conversation in English, so tended to leave the phones unanswered. The development of authentic situations was thus particularly important because the employees' confidence that they could cope with the telephone on the job was built up through practising in a non-threatening environment with the very people they would encounter at work.

MANAGEMENT AS A RESOURCE

Having the classroom in the workplace is also invaluable, as noted in an earlier section, for engaging in authentic tasks and for involving the expertise which managers and other personnel could contribute. In describing her task-oriented approach Margaret went into greater detail on how she set about teaching interview skills. In most courses she included a section on promotion, explaining that even older employees who would not be seeking further promotion could make use of this knowledge, passing it on to younger colleagues or friends – or even to their own children when they went for interviews.

Firstly, she was a great believer in the use of outside speakers. Where anything technical or formal was involved, and she felt that she lacked the expertise to speak adequately on the matter, she arranged for a visiting speaker from the relevant section. This was not only interesting for students but was a totally authentic activity since, for example, a staff

member from administration, where leave forms were handled, knew exactly what relevant information was constantly being omitted by employees, which information could usefully be omitted, and which points were absolutely crucial if applicants were to receive the allowances they requested. Therefore Margaret always invited someone from Administration to talk about leave forms. The topic was highly relevant to the students and they had the opportunity to ask their own questions.

Some very interesting points emerged in these sessions. For example in one class all the group members were supervisors and it transpired in the session on travel allowance forms that not one supervisor knew who was authorised to sign these forms. While they thought that their senior lines officer alone could authorise them, it transpired that they themselves could authorise all forms except for their own. This knowledge once realised subsequently did in fact speed up the whole process, enabling gangs to receive their travel money much more quickly, and it would not apparently have come to light had there not been an expert speaker on the subject to enlighten the group.

There were benefits all round from this process. For example, the administrative expert who had been irritated by constantly receiving incorrectly completed forms could see in the classroom sessions where more information might be needed and what sort of difficulties staff encountered in filling out their forms. This gave administration a greater understanding of problems in the field.

On the other hand experts who participated in the English class become more interested in it and tended to offer their services voluntarily when the next course began. This connection again built support for the ESL program, gaining favour where personnel might otherwise have been hostile. In the case of Administration, for example, feelings usually ran against English classes because this was the section that controlled resources, and it was likely that it would prefer to see resources being allocated elsewhere.

In addition to expert speakers from the workplace Margaret also invited outside speakers to address students on a wide range of issues. For example the education officers from the Consumer Affairs Bureau had proved to be very able speakers who with Margaret's help adjusted their talks appropriately for an ESL class. They also provided many interesting booklets. After the talk students practised asking questions.

With more advanced groups Margaret sometimes got the students to write a short report on the talk they had heard. With low level groups the Consumer Affairs representative had been prepared to role-play a very difficult shopkeeper who confronted a student attempting to return defective goods. These sessions had been both amusing and authentic, sometimes bringing painful recollections of experiences that students themselves had undergone.

Through discussions that opened up after the role-play students could sometimes discover their rights, and ways in which they had been cheated of their rights through ignorance and inability to find out the true situation. Again these discoveries reinforced Margaret's view that the assistance of an expert was both interesting and revealing as well as being authentic.

TEACHING INTERVIEW SKILLS

In dealing with promotion and interview procedures Margaret, in keeping with the principle just described, enlisted the aid of experts from management who participated in various ways including the giving of a talk and answering students' questions.

Using a task-oriented approach, her general procedure with the group was gradually to build up the skills which would be needed in an interview for promotion, and she did this through a sequence of activities. One such activity would be to put group members in "the hot seat" with the task, for example, of explaining what they might do if they found $20 in the street. The other group members then asked lively questions (the book "Look Who's Talking" had very good ideas for questions). Members being interviewed were always allowed to "pass" on questions they did not wish to answer, for example if private feelings were involved.

In these sessions Margaret emphasised the need to supply a more expansive answer in the interview situation. For example, it would not be sufficient, as she explained, to state that you would pocket the $20. Some reason would have to be supplied. In this way she put some gentle pressure on the students to be more forthcoming in their responses than they might have thought necessary, because an interviewer was looking for information and not just yes/no responses.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

As the students became used to the interview situation, the sessions could turn to approaching the kinds of issues and questions that would be involved in work-related interviews. At External Plant Margaret had had total commitment from management, so for her most recent classes there the managers had sat down and worked out the probable questions that would be included in the promotional interviews that students would actually be undergoing in the months following the course. Possible answers to these questions were devised and all group members were given the opportunity to work through questions and answers, and to practise with their colleagues.

In the next phase the students went to the managers' offices where the real interviews would later be held, and three interview panels were set up with a manager and two students on the panel and another student the interviewee. Solid feedback was given to the students after this exercise. The managers then took the hot seat, were interviewed as if they were trying for the position and were also given feedback. Another activity being contemplated was to follow up these kinds of session with a role-play of a potential applicant being interviewed by all the managers in front of the class.

Margaret felt that these processes all helped to boost the confidence of those who were later going to go for interviews. Activities were sequenced from those that were non-threatening towards more demanding situations. The activities themselves gave rise to discussion, as students considered issues such as what it must be like to be an interviewer, and the possibility that the interviewers themselves might be nervous, about their responsibilities for example or about their proficiency as interviewers. Cross-cultural differences in interview situations also came up for discussion.

Where students were reasonably confident – Margaret cited the instance of some female engineers from Russia – videos of interview role-plays had been made, to enable them to analyse and improve their performance. In discussing performance she always tried to emphasise positive aspects, calling on the group to identify these, and drew attention to aspects other than content at first, such as whether the interviewee was sitting comfortably, or speaking at an appropriate speed and volume.

The format of the interview and how to weigh responses was closely related to the selection criteria for the position and students needed

to learn how long an answer should be to a particular question, in terms of the question's overall significance. For example should a question such as "Why should we give you this job?" be given a longer answer than a technical question such as "What coverage of crushed rocks should go on a roadway when you are putting in conduits? In general then Margaret sought, with management's help, to prepare students in as many ways as possible in their efforts to gain promoted positions.

GENERAL ENGLISH AND WORK-RELATED ENGLISH

Workplace ESL instructors might find themselves asked to take General English classes in situations where the employees' work involved contact with the public. Margaret pointed out that General English classes were needed in the hospitals, for example, first because with so many staff members coming from overseas there was a communication problem amongst staff members themselves, and secondly because staff could not communicate with patients, when for example, they were them serving morning or afternoon teas.

It was clear from many of Margaret's comments that she included both work-related English and general English in her classes. A major element, for which general English was required, was having fun, and she described at various times how she liked to provide very active sessions in which students could participate animatedly and with great enjoyment. At the Hilton the domestic staff who cleaned the guests' rooms had great enjoyment working out little strategies for conversing with guests who spoke to them as they entered the room. The course was mounted during the Melbourne Cup season, so there was plenty of scope for devising conversations about hats and horses, all of which was much enjoyed and the English gained, while being general English, was at the same time extremely useful for work purposes.

The need for general English in the workplace itself was crucially important. Many managers saw the need for general English if the employee's work involved contact with the general public. They did not, however, see that the workplace was itself a public place where English was the normal *lingua franca*, and where employees needed at times to be able to talk about topics other than work. Margaret recalled a Mauritian student who said in the initial interview "When I'm with my own people

I joke and talk and when I'm at work I'm always quiet". She felt that there was a split between her home life where she was comfortable and relaxed, and her work life where she always felt shy and frightened of making a fool of herself.

Margaret also discovered through the courses that in fact employees often did have sufficient skills to carry on a conversation. What they lacked was confidence. At times it seemed that a major part of the ESL teacher's work was raising confidence levels, and, as it were, holding up a mirror to let the students see the skills and knowledge that they already had. She had found it useful to speak explicitly on the difference between communicative competence and formal accuracy. Thus she would ask the student "If you said that word wrong or put the verb the wrong way round, would it really make a difference to the message?" When students saw that the message was not really impaired by such formal inaccuracies they were encouraged not to be too concerned if they could not remember the surface rules. This lifted a burden from the learners, especially those learners who were perfectionists. She also pointed out that native speakers themselves were prone to speech errors.

Almost invariably the students that Margaret had interviewed commented on the problem of being without the dominant language whilst being an adult. They felt frustrated and experienced low self-esteem because they could not express their ideas with the complexity and the subtlety that they could employ in their first language.

The inability to tune in to the language around them, and the fears which built up inside second language learners, constituted a block to any progress and hence to any resolution of their problems. Margaret saw one of her main tasks as being somehow to change the way the learners tuned in to the language that surrounded them constantly everywhere they went, and to remove the fears and blocks, so that they could listen in a new way. The first step was to build up their confidence to help them perceive the knowledge and skills in English that they already possessed, and to develop their interest in the language. As they progressed and began to listen in a new way, they started making remarks such as "I heard someone use that on the television" or "I saw that word on SBS". Thus they were beginning to perceive the English around them and to become independent learners.

Margaret therefore used all possible general English resources as well as work-related material. Many of her exercises were fun, as noted above, and had nothing to do with the employees' work, except that they served to build up a skill which would eventually be used at work. Also, the use of general English in enjoyable activities served to raise the overall level of employees' English and hence also their confidence in participating verbally at work.

Margaret noted that managers commonly spoke after ESL courses about their staff's newly developed confidence and preparedness to have a say. At Workshops, for example, comments had been made to the effect that NESB employees who had been on the English courses were now much more prepared to make a contribution at quality circle meetings. Margaret observed that she had never taught any specific English to enable employees to speak on quality circle matters. She had in fact taught general English, not work-related English, at Workshops – as noted above, this was consistent with students' requests – but the confidence gained through general English classes had carried through to the work-related discussion.

With regard to negotiated curriculum and the instances where students requested English for non-work purposes, Margaret had always found managements to be extremely understanding and prepared to accept her professional judgment. However she had always documented the work-related content of the courses in her reports, since if top management did not always understand the point of teaching general English in an industrial setting, managers who did understand the issues might otherwise find it hard to persuade others that the resource allocation was justified. Gradually managers and students who had gained some understanding of the language-learning process, and of the language demands in the workplace itself, had come to see the need for general English.

With regard to the teaching of work-related English itself, Margaret believed that in the industrial ESL classroom there must be always be general English as well as work-related English. It was not possible simply to teach a very narrow corpus of English related to a specific work function. Nevertheless both management and most students in Telecom were concerned about work-related English. Employees in Workshops did not particularly want English for their jobs, but in the Lines area

employees, while able to speak well usually, had real difficulties with written English. Often they had reached a certain level in their work where either they themselves desired promotion, or their managers wished to promote them, but until they could complete certain very basic forms they could not take promoted positions. As a result these positions went to native English speakers who might be inexperienced in the work, or not the best people for the job, but who had the advantage of being able to write in English.

This situation was bad for Telecom itself and also induced low morale because experienced and able workers were being passed over. It was an example of both managers and students being united in perceiving an urgent need for work-related English. Certain specific sentences were needed for such forms, e.g. "The ditches broke down" but Margaret would teach these coupled with the teaching of general English. Especially in this instance she would teach the Dolch words (a list of the 220 most frequently used words in English: see e.g. Iaquinto 1977), since just to be able to spell these assisted students to make rapid progress with their written work.

When work-related language was requested Margaret used several approaches to ensure an authentic data base. One was to use the committee method (a small group with a secretary whose role it was to ensure that all members' opinions were represented) to canvas learners about the kind of language they needed to learn for work. A typical example would be to get the secretaries to find out when group members used forms in Telecom. Once the examples were pooled on the board the group members could prioritise, to decide which forms they most wanted to be able to complete.

The information gained from learners as to the industrial language they needed was used by Margaret to build up a data base on particular tasks or themes. Her other sources for the language data base were management, and personal investigation. Often after classes were over she talked to managers to gain as much information as possible, and she also made it her business to investigate the workplace personally – for example going out to see the men digging the trenches – to familiarise herself as much as possible with the relevant terminology. In these ways she endeavoured to provide authentic examples of work-related language.

ORGANISATION

On the question of routine Margaret emphasised her preference for flexibility. With the linesmen, who had only had a short period of formal education in their lives, and had not been in a classroom for 30 or even 40 years, she established a routine in the first days of class to help them get over their nervousness. For example she might have one group member per day talking about his/her home town, and then choosing the person who was to speak the next day. This was a gentle activity, the speaker knew his/her topic well, and after the first talk the group members could cope with the situation because they had already seen what would happen.

Each class had its own pace or tempo and it was a matter of professional judgment when it was time to change momentum with any particular group. Moving to something new and different was a very good and enjoyable stimulus for the students. Thus, Margaret liked to vary the focus in the classroom, sometimes using a whole group activity, sometimes putting someone in the hot-seat, and sometimes having individuals work on their own, for example accessing information, or in groups, as if they were on committees, or in pairs, as in pair dictation.

At times she acceded to students' requests – for example, the frequent request for the teacher to dictate a passage – and assumed the more traditional role of the teacher at the front of the class, because while such procedures contravened her own sense of the teacher's role, the students themselves enjoyed them and seemed to learn a great deal from them. At other times she had the students generating passages themselves, and each student taking turns at being the teacher and writing the work up on the board. The guiding principle was the desire for a stimulating and flexible classroom.

MACROSKILLS AND ACTIVITIES

While distinguishing the macroskills, Margaret, in company with many ESL teachers, favoured an integrated approach to teaching them. She described several approaches she used which had the advantages of involving students actively and of using all four macroskills. In many ways she felt that the integrated approach was in any case more authentic.

For example, except for diaries, written work was usually undertaken with readers or some sort of audience in mind and people talked about what they had read in the newspapers; in other words, there was a communicative purpose both in talking and writing, and either medium led naturally to the other in many everyday activities. Thus when Margaret organised writing activities she ensured that there was some sort of outcome, such as a book which the whole class shared or took home, or a game in which the players wrote part of a passage and then passed it on to be continued by other players.

Activities that integrated the macroskills could also be useful for reinforcement of grammatical rules. If the group had not been on a course before and had not studied any formal English previously Margaret did some work on structures and in particular taught how to use a question format. She had discovered that most Telecom employees in her classes were not confident about knowing how to ask questions. Accordingly she engaged in lots of surveys, which could be on any topic, sometimes topics that students could recall readily – wedding days if everyone was married – or possessions, things they would love to own, holidays etc. After conducting a survey, which of course entailed using batteries of questions, students could report back. There was also the possibility of utilising past or present tense, dependent upon the topic. These procedures enabled the teacher to focus on many different aspects of grammar should this seem appropriate.

A book which contained excellent material for promoting discussions was "Keep Talking". Margaret highly recommended it, giving as one example of its contents an activity on surveying the members' aims for the next week, year, five years or thirty years.

ACTIVE PERIODS

Combining the notions of flexibility, surprise and student participation had caused Margaret to build a repertoire of brief activities that lifted the students' spirits and energies and involved a lot of action. If the class was engaged in more serious work which involved sitting down for long periods, she liked to introduce a quick active session at either end of the longer session. One simple activity of this sort which had proved very effective was to engage in 'lucky dip' with numbered cards in a bag. On

drawing a card the student must find a partner and relate what they were doing that number of years ago, who was important in their lives, where they were, and what their hopes and aspirations were. A short burst of activity such as this had a stimulating effect upon the students and could lead to other sessions. For example the partner could report back to the group about what their friend had said, bringing in the whole issue of reported speech, or some incidental work on the past tense could take place.

TWO CIRCLES

Another very effective and stimulating activity involved the use of two circles. An inner circle, perhaps of students who shared the same first language, sat round in a circle facing outwards and they remained in the same seats. An outer circle perhaps of students speaking a different first language from those on the inner circle sat facing inwards and the members of this circle moved around after each of their conversational sessions with partners on the inner circle.

The seating arrangements meant that students must use English to communicate, and the movement of the outer circle meant that no student was stuck with a partner who was not good at participating, who was below their level in English, or with whom they had some ideological difference. The students were set a task. For example Margaret might have put information about many different kinds of holiday on to a number of cards. The students each drew a card with a holiday described on it, and had to convince their partner in the other circle that they should share this particular type of holiday and not the kind on the card that the other held. The outer circle kept their cards, but moved on at a certain point, to try their arguments on a new partner. The advantage of this experience was that as the student moved to a new partner s/he could analyse the arguments that worked previously, and those that did not. Thus they could drop ineffective strategies, and build up their skills, gaining plenty of practice at the one function they were trying to master. The activity enabled everyone to converse with each other in an orderly but very enjoyable way, and it could serve either to warm up or to re-energise a group. Margaret noted that students became very skilled at

"selling" their holidays, and of course it was always possible to make them exchange cards in order to argue a totally different case.

LITERACY: LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Margaret had used the approach to literacy developed by Gail Moraro and Philip McIntyre (see Moraro & McIntyre 1988) with great effect, and one reason that she was particularly impressed – by Gail's approach to spelling, for example – was that it removed all fear from the student. Students knew that they were going to succeed in the writing task set before them. It was impossible for them to fail because they had a correct model before them which they had merely to copy. Whether students only read the model or copied it, or whether they attempted self-imposed challenges such as covering the page, writing from memory, and then checking, in all cases they were learning the correct written representations and gaining confidence to write English.

Similarly, long-term residents with minimal proficiency in writing and spelling could make huge strides by learning the Dolch words since these represented over 50% of the printed words on any page. For the relatively small amount of teaching time required, the learning of the Dolch words opened up a huge portion of the printed word for ESL learners so that they could achieve rapid success in this area. Margaret observed that students started saying delightedly "I can read the sub-titles", because they were able to process half the material on the screen automatically. After years of teaching spelling by the phonic approach Margaret described Gail's method as "incredibly successful".

In keeping with the Language Experience approach but also stemming from her own sense of privilege that she worked with extremely interesting people who had a host of fascinating experiences to relate, Margaret drew a great deal of discussion content from her students' lives and backgrounds. On most courses each student gave a talk about his/her home area and there was a large map on the classroom wall so that everyone knew exactly where each speaker came from. Students gained confidence through speaking to the group and success was guaranteed because each speaker was an expert on the topic. The rest of the group could ask questions and the process was a means of developing group rapport.

When asking students to give a talk she selected a more confident speaker at the outset to provide a kind of model for the other students to copy. A certain standard was set and other students gained an idea of what to do and what to expect. Margaret had noticed, for example, that if the initial speaker had taken a slightly historical approach then most of the others made some effort to research the area from which they originated. This enterprise created interest for the speaker as well as the group.

Both in speaking and in writing Margaret believed that the task for ESL learners was much less formidable where content was familiar and easily accessed, the primary challenge being therefore to find the courage to attempt to express their information and thoughts in English.

Margaret agreed with Gail that the teacher should not place students under stress by asking them to produce written work which was beyond their level. She engaged in a great deal of dictation because the students requested it and thrived on it. However she rarely gave dictation without a model, so that if students were tired, not interested or finding the words difficult for some reason, they could just copy them. Margaret stressed that if students were copying, they were learning However she usually found that students were very strict with themselves, covering the model and only glancing at it if they needed to.

Usually Margaret had everyone looking at the text, a sentence for example, and then they might do a Cloze exercise, followed by a dictation in which one student wrote on the board, the rest on their papers. She always assisted the student writing on the board, or invited him/her to look at the model, and later another student acted as the teacher if the board version needed correction. In this way the group members saw the sentence some eight to ten times in a session.

Sometimes the group members would engage in personal writing and Margaret indicated to them that this time the writing was to come from the heart, and that the message was more important than the spelling, which could be adjusted later. This approach, more like that of process writing, gave the students the opportunity to build up confidence about expressing their own personal perspectives, and produced some delightful spontaneous material. Margaret developed the practice of making booklets containing the students' stories, for which they brought in photographs. The students were very proud of their books and really enjoyed reading each other's accounts. The production of the books, as

well as instruction on how to fill in forms or write reports, reflected Margaret's view that language activities such as writing should have purpose, or outcomes.

PAIRED CARD WORK

Jean De Neef invented this approach using information on numbered cards with a score sheet to record attempts and number of mistakes as students learnt and tested each other. Margaret used this method in various ways, for example with Dolch words, or for specific sentences – where an employee had to account, say, for lost production time with an everyday technical explanation, such as "Hit an obstruction" or "Chain on the ditches broke".

The students worked in pairs teaching each other the relevant information on the cards. When one partner thought they could write down the information on the card the other dictated it. The errors for each try up to 10 were recorded under the card number. The students could then look at the card as many times as they each wished to, until they scored zero on errors, or they might prefer to look at other cards, returning at a later time to this card.

There were several great advantages of this activity. First, it put the learners completely in control of their learning, of which card they selected and of how rapidly they went through the cards. If the partners were of similar ability, rapid learners could move quickly through a number of card sets, while slower learners could work on the cards that were most important for them, not covering as much in the time. Secondly, the teacher was left free to help individuals, and the method could be used by learners at home or anywhere else, in the future. Thirdly, it was participatory, and involved all the macroskills.

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers had proved extremely useful in Margaret's classes because they dealt with adult and up to date content and they were written in current idiom, unlike textbooks. Newspaper articles ranged widely in complexity so that something could be found to suit any student's level of ability in English. Also there were often a number of articles on

particular issues or topics so that the same topics with varying complexity of treatment could be used by a class of mixed abilities. Interesting vocabulary items were often contained in articles.

As ESL materials newspapers could be used for development of any of the macroskills. Margaret described for example how she used them with lower level groups to help them to summarise. A favourite older method which she described as demanding but invaluable was the Odile Menot method of dictation using newspaper material as the base. A short newspaper item was recorded on tape and played to the class which was asked to listen as carefully as possible. Class members then jotted down any words that they remembered, as many as possible. Secondly they wrote down any concepts contained in the item that they had heard. They counted the number of words they had written, to reach a total, and then listened to the tape again, adding to their list any new items.

There were many activities that could follow this procedure, but Margaret described the following. The students were given the original text from which they could, for example, circle all their own correct spellings, bracket their mistakes, or underline words they had written which were not in the original. This exercise usually revealed, when students read out their words, that they had stored or recalled the content words, as if the original had been a telegram.

Through this activity students had their attention explicitly drawn to words, including those that they had not heard before, and could engage in discussion, for example about those words that they had put down which were not in the original. It often transpired that such words summarised whole concepts, which was an interesting issue to discuss in relation to language acquisition. Thus students built up an interest in and a knowledge of words, seeing them many times, and an ability to listen out for words, and to tune in to the spoken language around them on radio and television.

After a number of exercises of this sort, the students' listening skills developed dramatically. This was important because listening comprehension could be a major problem. Margaret suspected, for example, that many NESB employees in industry (cf. those in the hospitals referred to above) did not understand much of the training they received, but that their lack of comprehension was not perceived by those

who were training them. In the first place employees might not have the skill to ask questions if they did not understand. In the second place they might be too embarrassed to reveal that they did not understand, or might be loath to cause trouble. Accordingly, when asked, they claimed to understand, even though this was often not the case. She emphasised that the first attempt in these exercises must be short enough and not too difficult so that the students experienced success. Initial success was essential.

Learning how to mount an argument using the appropriate language had proved an effective stimulus to learners' language development and Margaret had used controversial articles in newspapers as a basis for encouraging students to find arguments in favour of both sides of the issues (although they found this difficult at first). As both sides were fairly considered, students not only became very absorbed, they also started to manipulate the language in many different and appropriate ways. Oral discussion could then lead into written work.

NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

Perhaps because of her early training in psychology, Margaret was very impressed with research that revealed learners' preferences for different kinds of cue, for example visual, auditory, or kinesthetic, and one reason why she encouraged activity and participation by students was that it was more likely under such conditions that all types of perception would be engaged and learning thus facilitated.

Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) was an approach which she utilised, for example, in the teaching of spelling. Thus, as she explained, relying on auditory cues was not a good strategy for trying to learn spelling in English, although it would be very helpful in Italian where the sound system and orthographic system were in close correlation. Both native speakers of English and learners of ESL would have problems in mastering English spelling if they insisted on relying upon auditory cues. It was more appropriate in this case to develop visualising skills. Useful but difficult words like *eight*, *neighbour*, or *daughter* had to be recalled as an entire picture.

To develop visual cueing Margaret suggested, if students had difficulty recalling how to spell or write *eight*, that they imagined that they

were writing it in their favourite colour in letters three feet high across a wall. Students then seemed to be able to read back the large coloured word that they had "written" even though before they could not recall its form. Another tactic was to ask students to make a picture of the word in their mind and to then shut their eyes and see if they could still "see" it. The student could then "play" with the representation, enlarging it, reducing it, putting it in and out of focus etc. All these visualising exercises seemed to assist learners with the spelling of irregular words.

EXPLAINING

In using approaches such as NLP Margaret made a point of explaining to the students why auditory cues were not dependable in English and why it was important in this case to develop visualising skills. She had found that the students were very intrigued by these concepts and by the idea of adopting particular learning strategies. In general, she noted that explaining processes in this way made the exercise more meaningful and interesting, and was in any case consistent with the fact that this was an adult classroom.

Thus, for example, at the end of a two circle exercise she found it useful to ask "Why do you think we did that activity?". This paved the way for open discussion on confidence-building, on using English with different people in the community, about putting forward one's own ideas, or about considering the disadvantages of someone else's ideas. These were all aspects of adult life, and it was useful to hold direct discussion on how to tackle them in English so that, for example, their relevance to taking part in meetings at work could be demonstrated and analysed.

Another area which Margaret liked to discuss with students was that of memory storage, repetition, and recall. She explained the limitations upon memory load and the implications for learning language. Thus if twelve new items were presented in a lesson only about half of them would be stored and even these would not be recalled unless the students were exposed to them on other occasions. It was therefore unreasonable, she pointed out, to expect students to learn twelve items and remember them forever without further reinforcement. Margaret

encouraged students to attempt only a limited number of new items at any one time and at the end of the session she asked them to focus upon the two items they had learnt that day which they really would like to remember. This helped them to set realistic learning goals and to be optimistic that they could indeed retain the focused items. She also explained the need for repetition in learning so that students saw the importance of practice.

Discussions of this sort opened up the whole concept of learning processes and strategies for the students, in Margaret's view, and she tried as much as possible to make available to them the ideas and research she had learnt about in her own reading. Prior to the interview she had been reading Rubin (e.g. 1975) on the characteristics of the good language learner, and it was her intention to introduce these ideas into her own learning (she was intending to learn Japanese) but also into the ESL classroom, to let students know what the good language learner did. Adult learners liked to know why they were engaging in particular activities, and if the teacher had access to information on what made a good language learner, passing such information on to the students enabled them to see the point of classroom procedures and also gave them greater control over their own learning, since it helped them to perceive which exercises might be particularly useful to them and which not so useful.

At the end of a session Margaret often asked the students not only what they thought the purpose of the exercise had been, but which of them found it easy and what they thought the reason for this might be. Reflecting upon and discussing learning processes helped to produce learners who at the end of the course were confident, and keen to go out and take on further responsibility themselves for their own learning.

SKILLS NEEDED FOR INDEPENDENCE

Because of her belief that it was the learner who had to do the work of learning Margaret felt that part of the teacher's work was to give learners access to every possible strategy that they might be able to utilise, and especially to those strategies which they could deploy on their own in the future. Moreover there were limitations in industry upon the amount of teaching that students would receive so it was an important part of the teacher's work to help them towards independent learning.

It was often a complaint that English Language programs were available to immigrant employees – evening classes for example – but that they did not take advantage of them. In Margaret's view this was frequently because immigrant employees did not know what was involved in such courses and lacked confidence in their ability to cope with them. In many cases this feeling of lack of knowledge and confidence was quite justified. ESL students who were highly educated in their first language and had well-developed study skills did not have difficulty adapting to classes. On the other hand many ESL students had received very little formal education in their first language and had real difficulties in attempting something like a Cloze exercise, which might appear to be a relatively simple task. They had to be led very gently towards the accomplishing of a Cloze exercise, for they could not do it without considerable preliminary assistance.

There were basic study skills which inexperienced students needed to be shown. A simple example was that, when inserting words from a list into spaces in a passage, it helped to cross off the words that had already been used so that they were not constantly being re-examined. Teaching such practical skills was very useful for students who had not been in classrooms for many years, and it provided them with tools that they could utilise for other purposes in the future. Margaret believed that after students have been on a workplace English program, they were much more likely to undertake further English courses in their own time because they had experienced what was involved, and had developed the ability and the confidence to cope with ESL programs. Many of Margaret's students had in fact gone on to undertake further English classes in their own time, and this had, incidentally, been an excellent recommendation of the workplace program, since managements such as Telecom had seen that, as a result of its investment, employees had been prepared to undertake further study in their own time.

There were also other skills, of a procedural and organisational nature, that were invaluable in adult life and which Margaret sought to pass on to her students. Achieving an outcome from discussion groups and ensuring that it was representational was one such skill. Using the committee method referred to above, Margaret would sometimes ask one person to be the secretary to the group, with the task of ensuring that every group member's opinion was represented. When every single member

had been represented the ideas could be combined and pooled on the board, and one group member might be asked to record them. The group could then decide by discussion and voting which items might be included in an agenda or an article etc. This was a useful technique. For example, it could be used effectively when an employee was in charge of a gang and wanted every member of the gang represented on a particular issue. It could also be utilised at any kind of meeting, and those who had learnt how to participate, through a secretary requesting their opinion and refusing to allow them to remain merely observers as usual, had greater confidence and were more likely to participate in discussion in the future.

Related to the organisational skills needed in meetings described above was an area which Margaret had recently been exploring with one of her groups at Workshops, namely the learning of assertive language. The group members had been intrigued by the realisation, for example, that if a request were phrased in different ways it would achieve quite different results. This concept had come to the fore because the group had been considering the importance of conversational turn-taking and of all the strategies that could be used in order to take a turn. In the course of this discussion the whole question of interrupting had come up and the group had considered ways of interrupting and how to regain the floor and return to the topic, if as a speaker one had been interrupted.

Talking explicitly about assertiveness, about interrupting, or even about idiomatic language, added to the learners' grasp of language function and structure and thus facilitated their ability to comprehend the language around them. In addition, practising ways of being assertive, polite etc. increased their ability to participate as adults, which in turn built their confidence and motivation to go further as independent learners and to participate in the interactions of adult life.

MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT

I asked Margaret to discuss further why she saw management involvement in English programs as being so vital. These are the reasons she gave.

In the first place, students and managers were the experts on work-related English. While the teacher could learn, and continue to learn, the

language of a particular workplace throughout a course, there was always a limit to the number of examples she could devise. Students were requested to provide instructors with as many examples as possible, to demonstrate a particular process that the group might be studying. Managers, however, were in a position to know what sort of projects they would be mounting in the future, and in general because of their enormous knowledge of the industry could make an invaluable contribution to a course.

Management involvement also brought authenticity and realism to the teaching of skills development, with beneficial results. For example, if the group were practising interviews it was possible for the teacher to build up the learners' skills and confidence to a certain point, but this still might not be sufficient to bring success in a real interview because of the fear element. If, however, as Margaret had done, the teacher brought in a panel of managers who actually conducted practice interviews, and if a potential applicant was grilled by them and succeeded, then that applicant's confidence grew enormously. This kind of practice could not be conducted nearly as well without managers.

The involvement of managers in programs also raised awareness for both NESB employees and managers themselves of cross-cultural factors in the work-place. Knowing how the industry operated, and knowing the cultural norms in Australia for conducting business or dealing with the public were particularly important areas for NESB employees to learn. Native speakers seldom realised the enormous amount of information that was available to them simply because they knew the language and the system in which daily routines of businesses and institutions were conducted.

Cultural differences were not easy for immigrants to perceive without a control of the host language. Margaret related the case of Vietnamese data processors in Telecom who had been sent to her for assistance with English because they had failed interviews even though they were in fact the best applicants. After examining their speech patterns, Margaret had tried to persuade the processors to inject greater expression and volume into their voices and to maintain eye contact. However the response had been that if they spoke and behaved in that way in Vietnam it would be taken as a sign of insolence and anger.

Cultural differences of this sort were not understood either by the applicants or by the managers who interviewed them.

Another employee in Telecom had previously failed to be promoted despite her obvious talent because in addition to lack of skills in English and lack of confidence, which marred her interviews, she had also not understood the procedures attendant upon seeking promotion, such as obtaining references, believing for example that to enlist referees was in some way a kind of cheating. It was in these areas, that is to say, in explaining the way to proceed in the business world in Australia, that management could make such an invaluable contribution. It was also Margaret's belief that cross cultural information sharing could promote a more positive work environment in many organisations.

She felt that there were many advantages attached to having the ESL classroom positioned in the heart of the workplace itself. (Some illustrations of such advantages have been presented above.) In the 1986 Telecom pilot program at Ivanhoe there were accommodation problems and Margaret had the choice of a quiet room far away from the rest of the workplace or a much noisier spot close to all the offices. She chose the latter position in the belief that it was important for management to be within easy reach of the classroom. As a result a number of high level managers, and in particular the District Manager himself, kept visiting the class. In fact the District Manager became very involved in the program, seeing its value, and took to sending his senior management staff to visit the classes. Some who had been against the program initially, especially if their work had been in some way adversely affected by the arrangements, were completely won over and lent active support.

Margaret was very conscious of the need for influential managers to lend such support to the ESL program if it was to thrive or indeed to survive. A point she emphasised about active involvement by management in classes was that managers learnt so much about the program and their prejudices dissipated. Often a senior manager would have been enthusiastic about a course but some of the intermediate level managers were opposed to the plan because they were the people who actually had employees off the job and thus suffered all the inconvenience. When such managers sat in on a course they became involved, seeing their employees in a new way. This resulted in a high conversion rate in favour of the ESL program.

I noted that, in a survey of supervisors which I conducted after the 1986 pilot programs in Telecom, those supervisors who had attended classes, or taken a personal interest in the students who participated, were the ones who noticed changes and progress in their employees' willingness and ability to use English. Margaret thought that these supervisors would have been more in touch with the real needs of the students and thus more aware of the changes that were occurring. Also she had observed that a great rapport built up between the students and the managers who sat in on their courses, so that students developed a new confidence towards them and were more likely to give them information about their progress.

Margaret had conducted a student survey after her most recent course, with a range of questions about changes which they thought had occurred as a result of the English course, and the strongest change (noted by 90% of students) was the development of confidence in speaking about problems and faults and in approaching management. Managers who had actually stepped into the classroom had become, to quote one of the students, "like part of our big team, part of our family."

It had been Margaret's experience many times that managers' personal involvement in the course had had a most beneficial effect upon the learners' morale. Moreover managers themselves were often very surprised at the hidden talents possessed by their employees. In normal working arrangements linesmen, for example, would not meet managers on an informal basis, but the considerable hidden talent which such workers often had could come to the fore in an English class, and be observed by those managers who were there to see it. Sometimes this had resulted in promotion of NESB staff to more appropriate jobs, for example from linesmen in the field to estimators in the section headquarters.

EVALUATION OF THE COURSE

During her courses Margaret engaged the students in much informal monitoring of progress, the results of which helped to shape the next direction which the course would take. Thus she might ask them to consider whether their level in a particular skill, spelling for example, had changed as far as they could see, and to what extent, or she might

simply get them to list the various things they had done up to that point in the course. She then asked them to consider which topic or activity they liked best or derived most benefit from, and what sort of course content they would like to continue with or expand upon etc.

Overall evaluation of the course was an aspect of the program on which Margaret expended much effort, using a range of methods to explore what changes had taken place in the areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. Typically evaluation was designed to discover whether the students' needs for English had been met so that they could perform better in the situations where they had previously been having difficulty.

The task-oriented approach carried a built-in evaluation mechanism which was more telling in its effects as the tasks moved towards genuine work situations. For example, if a supervisor came into class or telephoned and gave a message to one student to pass on to another – an everyday situation in many organisations – the supervisor could immediately verify whether the message was accurate or not. These were simple tasks, but as Margaret observed, very powerful in their ability to effect rapid change. Where management and instructors worked together the changes were observable by all parties.

Within the classroom Margaret, in addition to surveying students' views as to the changes they had perceived, also used video to great effect in course evaluation. At the outset of the course she had videoed students talking freely on their own, (or in pairs, which was less threatening for the early days of a course), and then repeated the exercise at the end of the course. She always explained to the students exactly why the video was being made. The post-course video always revealed an enormous change in the students' level of confidence in English, and provided broader evidence of possible changes than evaluating some particular improvement in a specific area of grammar.

Another activity which she had videoed was students' use of the telephone. They were filmed answering the phone and passing on the information they had received. Their performances in their first phone session could then be compared with how they were managing the same tasks by the end of the course. Videos were quite difficult to achieve but in Margaret's view provided a very powerful way of documenting change.

EVALUATION IN THE WORKPLACE

In the workplace itself changes in the students might not readily be observed for a number of reasons. One reason that Margaret discussed at this point was the fact that the changes were gradual so that onlookers did not realise that they were occurring. By way of example she described the typical comment "Oh I don't know if they've really changed much. Of course they're talking all the time." When she asked about this last point, the speaker suddenly realised that this willingness to talk was in fact a big change in the NESB employees, but that he had grown used to the newer situation, not remembering how things had been before.

A second reason put forward by Margaret for failure by onlookers in the workplace to note the changes that were occurring as a result of the English program, was that onlookers needed to know what to look for. This was one reason why it was so important for managers themselves to become involved in the program. One EEO officer in Workshops was a native Greek speaker who had learnt English as her second language. Because she was aware of what was involved in learning ESL and actively interested in noting changes, she was able to draw attention to the fact that the female employees attending English courses were subsequently contributing to a much greater extent at quality circle meetings. Behavioural changes of this sort noted by management and other personnel provided excellent evaluation of the ESL program's effectiveness.

Another good example of this kind of evaluation was the case of the newly promoted employee in the engraving section whose promoted position involved answering the telephone, an operation she simply could not carry out in English. After the course she was able to take phone calls without any difficulty – a point duly observed and noted in the workplace – and furthermore, in the absence of her male colleague, was able to take on the position of acting supervisor, discharging her duties with great competence.

A very powerful evaluation of the ESL program, which was touched on previously, was whether employees were motivated and enabled through their English course to advance further in their careers. As noted earlier many students in the Telecom English programs had been motivated to pursue further English classes whereas previously they

had lacked the confidence to attend. In External Plant where management had taken on the ESL program as part of a comprehensive staff-development package many more students than usual had gone on to further work-related courses, encouraged by management to undertake courses for learning to drive ditches and back hoes, for example, or courses for supervisors or crane chasers.

Margaret attributed the extent of such further post ESL course training to the interest and encouragement that External Plant management showed. In other programs in Telecom, however, similar results had occurred on a smaller scale, where students had become self-motivated, and even in External Plant some students had shown individual enterprise in this area. One student had enrolled in and successfully completed an evening bridging course in English for intending supervisors at Broadmeadows TAFE, so that he was then able to enter a training course to become a supervisor.

These results satisfied one of the pervasive principles behind Margaret's approach to her courses, which was to enable students to advance and achieve their goals in Telecom, an achievement which would benefit the industry as well as the employees. They also provided strong and indisputable evidence of the effectiveness and value of the ESL program.

LATER PROGRAMS

THE AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE

In July 1992 I interviewed Margaret with Jean de Neef to ask her about her work after Telecom. She singled out the two courses that she had taught with Jean as being the most significant. The first of these was at The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) at Dandenong.

The impetus for setting up this course, which was to focus on communication, came from the EEO Adviser at the ATO. There were large numbers of NESB staff at the Dandenong Taxation Office and there was a feeling amongst them that they were subject to unfavourable discrimination with regard to promotion, for reasons of race, colour, accent etc. Such discrimination, if it existed, was illegal in Australia under EEO legislation. On the other hand, managers and supervisors were aware of valuable staff that they felt they could not promote because of poor communication skills. The EEO Adviser felt that a course in communication could help to overcome these problems.

After an initial meeting with the EEO Adviser, Margaret and Jean, to their trepidation, were asked to go and talk at a meeting of some 60 staff members. They indicated what they could offer and then invited the NESB staff to express their own views on their English language needs by means of a questionnaire. There followed a meeting with managers and supervisors to explain again what they could offer, what the employees wanted and what was possible in the time. Managers and supervisors were asked for their perspectives on participants' needs, and the supervisors' role in the training program was established. A tripartite committee representing management, unions and course providers was set up, the EEO Advisor and a course participant also being members. This committee monitored the course and dealt with any problems.

THE COURSE

63 applicants were interviewed and their needs prioritised on the basis of the following list, which had been compiled from their responses in the questionnaire:

Pronunciation (including accent, intonation and rhythm).
Interviews (and written applications).
Cultural differences.
Expressing yourself clearly and concisely when talking to clients.
Telephone skills.
Negotiating skills (including customer contact).
Being assertive and overcoming shyness
Listening skills
Discrimination in the workplace
Writing skills (including style, spelling and grammar)
Australian slang and expressions
Body language
Casual conversation
Speaking at meetings

Two groups would be needed because of the large numbers. Most participants were from Mauritius or Sri Lanka and the remainder from various South East Asian countries. More than half were relatively new arrivals, having been in Australia four years or less. 75 % were women. Most were under 40 years of age. The group was well educated with the majority having tertiary qualifications. Their English language skills were good overall, and in some cases excellent. Virtually all had sufficiently developed listening/speaking skills to enable them to deal with routine work. However, there were about 16 whose reading/writing skills would not be adequate for corresponding with clients.

The aim of the course, then, was to produce changes in the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour of the NESB participants, in the interests of Equal Employment Opportunity.

Margaret and Jean saw at once that this course was going to be extremely daunting and arduous. Numbers were large, language levels were very high – higher than those involved in most workplace courses – the content demands were challenging, and there were no materials available at all. They therefore sought and obtained permission to work together as a team, being jointly responsible for all aspects of the course.

Tabulating the information from staff on their priorities, the instructors devised a modular course to run for 14 weeks. There was a core module, taken by all students, on Customer Contact Skills. This

contained units on assertiveness skills, conflict resolution skills, personality type and communication style, presentation skills and negotiating. It ran for three hours on Wednesday mornings and was team-taught. Other strong preferences expressed were for pronunciation and for reading and writing. These were divided, Jean taking pronunciation and Margaret the literacy unit (2 hours a week each). Finally there were four smaller modules, on conversation skills, telephone techniques, interview skills and meetings, respectively. Staff could attend some or all of these modules, according to their needs.

OUTCOMES

At the end of the course evaluative comments were sought from students and supervisors, and rather unusually, the instructors were able to conduct a long-term evaluation (by questionnaire), taking comments from staff four to ten months after they had completed the course. In terms of the topics raised in the questionnaire, to which 42 staff responded:

- 64% had applied for promotion: 70% of these said that attendance on the course had influenced their decision to apply: all but one felt that the skills acquired on the course helped them at the interview: 33% of those who applied received promotion: eight staff believed that the course had encouraged them in their decision to apply for further training.
- 81% considered that the skills gained had helped them to deal with members of the public.
- 71% stated that they now participated more in meetings.
- 80% to 90% believed that the skills acquired on the course had helped them to communicate with other staff about ATO matters, interact socially with other staff, handle conflict and criticism and behave more assertively.
- 78% believed that the course had helped them to feel more at home in the ATO.

Comment from Margaret and Jean on details of the course which they considered important will be included in a later section. This section closes with a comment from the EEO Adviser who initiated the course.

> "I believe it has achieved excellent results. Many have received promotion, improved their negotiation skills and improved their phone skills etc. – and attribute this largely to the course; it has given them the confidence and know-how. Managers and supervisors are continually extolling the virtues of this course and are starting to appreciate cultural differences."

BRAKE AND CLUTCH

Margaret had taught general courses at Brake and Clutch before, but this was a special course that she and Jean designed for the machine setters. Machine setters, as Margaret explained to me, have a very responsible job and are pivotal in the success of the company where its practical running is concerned. Teams of machine operators run the production machines from day to day, but they are led by a machine setter who adjusts the machine for a particular job, sets it up and then supervises its operations. Thus if operators have any problems with the machines they go to the machine setter. The setters have to be able to read from a plan all the specifications that are required by a car company for acceptance of a part. They are responsible if the parts are not being made properly. They tend to be people who have been in a company a long time and are very confident because they are used to running a team of operators.

THE AUDIT

Management at Brake and Clutch had put some machine setters through a training course and had found that they could not read English well enough to continue training. A decision was taken by the Training Manager to have all the machine setters interviewed, to investigate their English language skills generally, and particularly their reading skills. Margaret and Jean conducted a language audit of 29 NESB machine setters, reporting in August 1990. They identified a large discrepancy between the setters' average listening and speaking skills in English (ASLPR 2 – 3) and their literacy skills (ASLPR 1 for reading and 1- for writing). Clearly their literacy skills were not adequate for undertaking TAFE courses, in which about 2/3 of those interviewed expressed an interest, but looking at the test materials used for appraising the reading skills it was also clear that there were difficulties on the job itself.

READING SKILLS

Using familiar materials from the Brake and Clutch workplace the instructors ascertained that of staff interviewed:

- 83% could correctly locate a specific street using a street directory index. However, many of these used a trial and error method and were unfamiliar with alphabetical order. By implication, such staff would have difficulty locating information that was listed alphabetically in computers and records.
- 55% could use the contents page of an Occupational Health and Safety Handbook to locate specific information (some very slowly). The others would therefore have difficulty locating information in a technical or study text.
- only 17 % were able to comprehend 50% or more of the words selected from Process Control Plans and engineering drawings. Examples of words on plans that few knew the meaning of were *prior to* , *discontinuous* , and *close grained* .
- only 17% were able to provide the gist of an article in Brake and Clutch newsletter, and only 10% were able to find some specific information in another article. By implication, many staff would have difficulty extracting the gist from information on notice boards or in training texts, and finding specific information in manuals or on plans.
- only 7% understood the two safety warnings used ("If inhaled could be harmful or fatal." and "If swallowed do not induce vomiting."). By implication the setters who were leading hands or occupational health and safety representatives would not be able to explain these, or the many other such warnings that appeared in the workplace, to the staff in their sections.
- only 7% could order written information (in this case a business letter) into a logical sequence. The instructors thought that some cultural differences in letter formats could have affected results on this task. However it was probable that many staff who could not organise the text would have difficulty in, for example, following an extended or complex written text, or ordering information to present in a report or at a meeting.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CCURSE

On the basis of their findings Margaret and Jean recommended literacy programs for the machine setters at Brake and Clutch, and they themselves conducted a reading course, again by team-teaching. Margaret made the following comments on the course. The students were for the most part long-term residents from the earlier years of post World War 2 immigration, many coming from Croatia and Greece. They were very skilled workers and leaders, and because they were so vital to the whole operation they had to be available, which meant that they could not be off the job for a long time. This imposed limits upon the course, and forced Margaret and Jean to set very realistic expectations.

It was a particular concern that the staff were not able to read the plans they needed to use and that they had extremely limited vocabularies. They had heard words like *achieve* , for example, but did not know what it meant. A word like *alignment* was not known, but many parts had to be aligned in the production process so the word was extremely frequent on the charts. The key word on all plans, *outcome* was unknown by many staff on the course. This word was at the head of every plan put out by the car companies, because it pointed to the end product of the entire specification. The instructors were therefore very concerned to build up learners' vocabularies, especially words related to work processes. However, the instructors also felt that these words could not be isolated from more general communicative needs so a great deal of general English was incorporated as well, still focusing on reading skills.

USING A TEXT

Margaret and Jean therefore took a decision to use a book. Using a book gave the learners some sustained reading, and the text could be used for practising some important skills. The book selected was an edited Penguin version of A.J. Facey's *A Fortunate Life* . The book had 16 chapters and the course ran with two sessions a week for 16 weeks. The book was used each week in one of these sessions. The class agreed in negotiation to do homework, so the book was used for that also. As Bert Facey was a person who was illiterate at first in his adult life, he used very simple language, simpler than that of the average novelist, so the

text level was exactly what the instructors wanted. The vocabulary contained a sufficient number of slightly more difficult words that were not known by the learners, but not so many that they would get lost. Also the book had a rural setting and, as many of the staff had come from rural backgrounds in Europe, they loved it.

The words that were in the book often turned out to be exactly the words that the instructors wanted the staff to learn for work purposes, in fact they could be described as quite work-oriented and useful. Some examples were *achieve* , *sufficient* , or *attitude* . *Attitude* was a particularly good example. It was not known at all by the staff and yet it was frequently used in the workplace, in pep talks for example. The men and some of the women in the group were in charge of work teams so they would frequently be asked "What is the attitude of your staff to this?", "What are the attitudes of your operators to these changes?" etc., but they did not know this word.

VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION LEVELS

I questioned this, suggesting that the staff must surely have often heard these words. Jean noted that their vocabulary was at a low everyday conversational level and that words of a slightly higher register defeated them. Margaret added that there was an observable cut-off point in their lexical knowledge. After working with the group for a while she and Jean could tell of a given word whether the group would know it or not. However, because these staff members were for the most part natural leaders with buoyant, extrovert personalities, because they were good managers who organised their sections very confidently, anyone meeting them would tend to overestimate their ability to understand the language. It emerged that this was exactly what their supervisors were doing. So when the setters went to a meeting and then had to go back and report something to their staff, they could not really do this because they had probably lost the gist early in the meeting. Since these staff members were supposed to communicate information from management through to the operators, their comprehension difficulties were of particular concern.

To support the point about comprehension problems, Margaret recalled how when she had previously taught at Brake and Clutch there had been a very fine general manager who thought it important that he

should speak personally to every worker once within a half-year. He even went in early at breakfast time to catch the night-shift workers. But when she had tested NESB workers to see if they had understood what he said, it emerged that there was zero understanding of his speech. After about two lines the NESB workers just cut out because they could not understand the first few words. So although they sat and listened very politely, the whole point of his exercise was lost for the NESB staff.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

To return to the book, the instructors used it to develop two main skills. The first was to train readers in giving an approximate meaning to an unknown word in the text. Excerpts of the text were used with words missing, and the class worked out meanings in groups. The second was learning to extract the main point from a section of text. Staff could not do this at all at first; they needed training and the initial strategy used was to give them multiple choice questions.

Vocabulary was of paramount importance and the students learnt words from the selected text and from work-related material. An example of the second was the vocabulary for naming faults. Previously, staff had only known how to say "It's broken", but since there were very specific terms in industry for referring to faults in different areas, the instructors taught them all the names of typical faults in each section, so that they could refer correctly to types of fault, for example, in production of metal, rubber or plastic items. Margaret and Jean hoped that once staff knew the correct term for a fault (splinter, scratch, tear, etc.) they would report more often, rather than avoiding comment because they were unsure of the terminology in English.

The group worked hard at home on vocabulary learning. They each had three envelopes – of words they knew, words they did not know, and some they were not sure of. For work-related vocabulary the instructors brought in experts, for example the designers who had produced the plans, and got them to talk about the meanings of the words used. If the experts used language that was too difficult for the group the instructors helped the speaker to present the material in an accessible way, perhaps providing a simpler definition, as the word was discussed. Work-related words would be put on cards and the definitions on other cards, so that

many mix-and-match, and other vocabulary games could be played. Vocabulary was reviewed constantly throughout the course.

COMMENT ON OUTCOMES

In tests that took place at the end of the course staff showed a distinct improvement overall in their L2 reading skills. General vocabulary had greatly improved and especially knowledge of work-related words. The instructors felt satisfied that the aim of helping staff to understand the specifications needed in their area of work had been achieved with considerable success. Staff were very enthusiastic about the course, wanting to go on to a second course on writing. Margaret noted that the women on the course were extremely enthusiastic. They had been in Australia a long time, but had never had an opportunity to attend an English class, so this course was appreciated enormously and they worked extremely hard in class, and also at home getting their children to test them on their learning. At the end of the course, Margaret and Jean took the group to the local library, as an encouragement to them to go on with their reading. The librarian showed them how to use the library, including how to find books in their first language.

For the instructors, as Margaret explained, it had been a particularly enjoyable course to teach, partly because of the group' s appreciation, but also because it was so defined in its aims and syllabus, so that the teaching task did not involve having to cover too many aspects. There was very favourable feedback from management, letters of praise being sent to Simon Crean in the Federal Government, and to Mr. Scales, Head of the Vehicle Building Industry.

Unfortunately, the staff did not get a second course because, as part of the recession-hit car industry Brake and Clutch was forced to retrench 50% of its staff. In fact the program itself suffered towards the end. The old problem occurred of strong reststance to work -release by supervisors, because of the demand upon them to increase productivity with a reduced staff. While some supervisors may not have been convinced anyway about the value of an English course, Margaret felt that the major problems of work-release that the program encountered towards the end were just a sign of the times.

It was a tribute to the success of the program, given the recession, that having lost half its staff, Brake and Clutch management decided it wanted a full report on the language skills of all the staff who remained. AMES had sent in a team of 12 instructors (led by Gail Moraro and Ann Duggan) to conduct the language audit, and colleague Jennifer Fall was now teaching full-time at Brake and Clutch.

CROSS CULTURAL AWARENESS

Management at Brake and Clutch also requested that the instructors organise a management awareness briefing. Margaret and Jean brought in an expert to run the briefing and they themselves conducted a cultural awareness workshop for managers and supervisors, entitled "What's happening here?". The workshop presented examples of cross-cultural encounters in the workplace with questions about what was occurring. (For example, a supervisor says "Good job!" to a Thai worker who responds "No, no, I've done nothing!") In the example given the group considered why the employee replied in that way. Jean noted that some in the group did not see at first that there might be a cultural difference operating, and thought the worker stupid.

Margaret and Jean also organised a three hour cross-cultural awareness session in the Dandenong Town Hall for 90 ATO managers and supervisors of all levels (including the Commissioner and Deputy-Commissioner). This they found extremely daunting, but they brought in speakers from Canberra. Jean described the communication courses they had run at ATO Dandenong, and Margaret organised a workshop in the following way. Students on the courses were chosen (the more extrovert personalities who would not be too frightened) as resource persons representing five different countries, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India and the Philippines. With the help of a handout that presented work situation topics and asked leading questions, managers worked in groups to find out as much as possible from their resource person what would be the workplace norms in their country of origin for the situations mentioned. One manager then reported for the group at the end of the session in a massive cross- cultural exchange.

The fact that the top level managers were participating in the groups encouraged the less willing managers to make an effort. Groups were

asked to consider how workplace norms and attitudes in these other countries would compare with those of the Australian workplace, for example the ATO, and whether immigrant employees from those countries would have difficulties working in Australia. From the responses given in the final exchange session, the exercise seems to have been very revealing: e.g. workers in Vietnam do not interact socially even with people at their own level: in India people do not communicate with body language to the same extent as in Australia: staff from Mauritius would appreciate training in interview skills because there are few promotion interviews in the public sector in Mauritius. It was encouraging to hear managers expressing interest and concern at what they had learned. For example, one manager thought to be unsympathetic said that he now realised how difficult it must be for immigrant workers trying to understand the Australian system, and that he felt guilty for not making NESB staff more at home.

This ends the description of these later courses which Margaret taught for AMES. In the next section we look at some comments made by Margaret and Jean on their experience of team-teaching.

THE AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE: TEAM TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

Most workplace instructors that I have interviewed have at some point alluded to the often isolated situations in which their work places them, and a number have suggested the value of having a colleague to work with. At Brake and Clutch and at The Australian Tax Office Margaret and Jean had the rare opportunity of teaching together on a course, so in the 1992 interview which they jointly gave I asked them to talk about the features of the ATO communication course that stood out for them, about the experience of team teaching and about what they had learnt from observing each other in the classroom. The following description is an edited version of parts of the transcript, but I have where possible presented the comments verbatim, to try and portray the interview more directly.

UNITS TAUGHT SEPARATELY

As noted in Section 5 Jean had taught the pronunciation unit and Margaret the literacy, but they had been able to sit in on each other's sessions. Margaret was very impressed with the way Jean had tackled the work of pronunciation which all workplace colleagues felt to be particularly hard, given amongst other factors the severe time restrictions. Jean explained that she had divided students into two pronunciation groups, one of French speaking background and one of Asian background, and had focused on stress and intonation in English rather than just sounds, since it was often these features that made a difference to understanding by native English speakers. In evaluation some students made comments to the effect that they believed this was helping them to make a better impression, for example in telephone conversations with customers.

Margaret was not, however, impressed with her own unit on literacy, because the students were all at different levels. She had done some general work (e.g. formulating letters, increased reading speed) but felt the unit was run-of-the-mill and not very successful. If she were doing it again she would tackle it differently, making two groups of high and

low levels respectively. She and Jean both stressed that, whereas with oral skills it was more possible to work with mixed levels, with literacy the group members should be very carefully matched, and it was far better to divide learners into two groups than to try to teach them as one.

Of the smaller units both instructors felt that they could have done better on the meeting skills and negotiating skills units. On the latter Margaret recalled how they had had to develop it right at the end and did not have very good materials. (Lack of materials was mentioned earlier as a major challenge of this course. LW.)

ASSERTIVENESS SKILLS

Looking at the course overall Margaret believed that the most important work they had done had been in the core unit, Customer Contact Skills, which had included a significant section on assertiveness skills. She commented:

"I think that a lot of people who came on the course felt, whether accurately or inaccurately, that there was discrimination against the staff born overseas – and I don't know that that was always accurate. I just think that they felt – I think their self-esteem was down a little bit being in a new country, and having to re-establish themselves, and not quite being able to work out the system as – perhaps they've been extremely successful in their own country – and – I felt that our course gave them a boost – a boost to their self-esteem – and especially the assertiveness unit. I'd say that was absolutely essential as part of our program, building up skills, knowing what are your rights, how to express them in a way that would be acceptable – which was firm, but not aggressive, and not passive or non-assertive We kept looking at those behaviours."

Jean noted that a couple of Sri Lankan women had dropped out of the assertiveness skills section. They were rather shy and the ideas were probably pushing them too far. Also the ideas were probably culturally alien. Margaret endorsed this point, recalling that when they were discussing appropriate workplace behaviours the women had said that if they found themselves under pressure in the workplace in Sri Lanka it was appropriate to cry and look very feminine.

The assertiveness section went on for six weeks. Jean mentioned that Margaret had run report-back sessions throughout, getting students

to report on things they had done outside class as a result of the course. A typical report would be "I drove the car. If I hadn't done this course I would never have driven the car. I was too scared." Margaret added: "Some people did big things and some people just did little things, but for them they were important in their own lives – like just getting their husbands to mind the children occasionally and gave them a break, or – one lady went and spoke on – and read the Sri Lankan news on ethnic radio, as a result of it. She sort of took herself step by step – and then took off without us, and went a long way past where we'd left her – and ended up asking her husband to mind the children while she read the ethnic news.

So we got really big results and some people just changed a little bit. But we were very nervous about it because we didn't want people to do things that – to be totally out of character – so we talked about places where you might safely experiment, for example at your local shop with the meat, or at the hairdressers, getting your hair done and then if it's not quite right asking for something to be changed, so we always tried to start it off on a very safe small thing."

CROSS CULTURAL AWARENESS

(Margaret) "We did do a lot of work with cross cultural information, because what we found was that actually everybody did have quite a lot of English, but it was the way they perceived the Australian workplace that was the trap, not necessarily their English. Although, of course if someone has an accent, someone who's angry and upset about their tax, that's a good thing to seize on. You know," I don't want to speak to this person with an accent Get me someone else!"

So we did a lot of work on: What are your rights working within the Australian Public Service? What should you put up with and what should you not put up with from a client? (Jean: "Or a supervisor.")

We didn't try to do this ourselves, we brought in experts on this. We used all the expertise around The Taxation Office and brought in people from Personnel and EEO, and so forth to help us on this – and we brought in people who spoke about customer contact skills. So that was very interesting, and we compared – in nearly all our units we would get people in from Mauritius and say "Now in this X situation, what

would be typically happening in Mauritius? What would happen in Sri Lanka? What would happen in China? And then we'd get people to give us feedback. And we didn't – I mean we learnt so much ! And the results were so unexpected often – and the people in the room were quite shocked often to find out that in Mauritius if you did this it would have such and such a reaction. And then we said "OK, what do you think is the norm in Australia ? And often, really our people hadn't been here a long time and they didn't realise that what they were doing didn't really go down very well with the Australians. And it might be with their colleagues, or it might be with their supervisors, or it might be with their customers.

So, for example in Sri Lanka, I think if you put your head down . and you work very hard and you seem to be extraordinarily diligent – work through your coffee-break – you're much more likely to get promotion. Now if you did that in The Australian Taxation Office, you're not, because what they're looking for is your ability to relate at coffee-breaks and take an interest in the welfare of the people you're working with, and so forth. So you're not only looking for skill and competency and efficiency in the job, but the further you go up the hierarchy the more you're looking for people skills.

So we did a lot of work on comparing different expectations in different cultures, and I really think that made a big difference. Well, it was fun too! We loved it because we learnt so much."

INTERVIEW SKILLS

(Margaret) "One of the units we ran was on interview skills, and it wasn't very long, (maybe 9 hours or 12 hours) but we got very good feedback on change. What we did was, we looked at the procedures within The Taxation Office. We brought in someone from Personnel who was frequently on panels and knew quite a lot of our participants, and got her to talk about what she was looking for when she was on a panel. Then we looked at how to write up your initial application and what people are looking for and what they're not looking for. And then we did a mock interview where we had three people (including a union person) who were frequently on panels – and we got people to go through mock interviews – and I believe that was very practical.

People just didn't quite realise how the system worked in Australia. And often in their country it would be perhaps just delivering all your

documents, and putting your head down and being very quiet while someone read through how diligent you'd been. So we were talking about The Taxation Office and how at that time it was really an American high-sell that was being used. And also there was a new method coming in, wasn't there? So we were even able to let them know what they were *going* to have, which is (Jean: "Just go in and talk about yourself!"). So that actual method of interviewing people hadn't come in, but we were able to warn them that that was going to happen. Which was the exact opposite of being in their own country.

At the end when we did our post-course evaluation (Jean: "and we did a survey, didn't we, some months after we'd finished?") we found a very large – huge – proportion of people had had a go at applying for positions – and in actual fact quite a lot of people gained promotion. So even for a very short input of time, I believe we got a very large amount of mileage – and we were really surprised ourselves."

BENEFITS FROM TEAM TEACHING

Margaret had never before had the experience of teaching with someone else in the classroom. She had known Jean as a colleague for 11 years but they had never team-taught together. Her overall comment was that, although the ATO course was extremely exhausting, she had come out of it feeling very nourished, feeling quite different about her teaching. As she and Jean were very different teachers they had learnt a lot. She felt she had learnt something new each session that would be useful for her own teaching. Jean thought it was the other way around!

(Margaret) "Jean is very good at curriculum planning, very detailed, very thorough. She works through all the steps. Whereas I – I – teach with a broader brush. I'm a bit inclined to jump over things and not see them. So, together ...".

(Jean) "But you're very good at *ad hoc* things, you know, dealing with things as they arise, and being able to, to just, I don't know what it is – take the essence out of something as it arises and really deal very well with it."

(Margaret) "So together we worked really well! And there was a lot of synergy, because working together, there was extra energy, and the

energy just came, and ideas. I don't know how Jean felt, but with my personality, being extrovert, I get ideas from being with people. I got a lot of fresh ideas, whereas if I'd been sitting at home at night designing a unit by myself it would have been more limited.

With another observer in the classroom I feel that our monitoring of the program was much more accurate, and so more able to adapt week by week exactly to the needs of the group. We had more accurate data about the students. I would ask them how they used skills learnt in class in the real world, and we pushed this, but with the responses monitored and recorded, we could build on it in the next session. This was very responsive to the students."

Margaret and Jean also sat in on the units that the other taught separately and they noted that this was extremely helpful for monitoring what was happening to the individual students. One instructor could not notice everything, so the observer could take note of individual responses, for example monitoring the rest of the class while the instructor was talking to an individual.

Aside from planning, teaching and observing they had done a great deal of work together on providing students with detailed feedback on the talks they had given in class. The talks were recorded and afterwards they analysed them together. They would consider in detail e.g. why the talk was hard to listen to, why would it not be well received by native-born Australians, why they wouldn't understand it, etc. They found that together they identified points for feedback that each might not have spotted alone. Jean wrote up the analysis to be presented as feedback to the individual student. The students also received the tape so that they could listen objectively, matching what they had said to the feedback.

In addition to providing useful concrete feedback the instructors tried to incorporate exercises to assist with the points made. The whole group would participate in those exercises, because it invariably turned out that the problem was not restricted to one group member. If a Sri Lankan had a certain language problem, then it would emerge that almost all the other Sri Lankans had the same problem.

Margaret and Jean paid much careful attention to giving good feedback, precisely because it was a very difficult task for the students. As the course proceeded each speaker learnt from those who had gone

before. Speakers began to use the board more confidently, and to give themselves a break by using the OHP or asking the audience questions. Later speakers thus had an advantage over earlier speakers because they had learnt during the program, and through this, the analyses and the exercises there was cumulative feedback for the whole group. The analyses were much appreciated, it seemed, because, given a choice of "light" or "heavy" feedback, the students all opted for the latter.

They were only able to have one round of these talks and Margaret noted that if they had had a second round she would have used video to assist with feedback.

A great deal of work had been needed on preparation of course units and especially of materials. Margaret and Jean had worked every evening and at weekends (because in addition to the three days a week on this course they were also teaching on other programs), and they met together every Friday to review progress and to plan the following week's sessions. They began to locate materials in different places and put together a good collection of videos and books. Thus, although team-teaching was expensive, they felt that it had brought many returns. In addition to the materials they had located, all the materials for higher levels of student that they had prepared were now available for their colleagues, who would not have to go in "cold" in future programs.

LEARNING FROM OBSERVATION

Jean had been fascinated by one part of the course that Margaret took, which she observed and felt she herself could not have done. Margaret was using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Scale, with the help of a properly qualified person to administer the scale, to bring the factor of personality type to the students' attention. The scale was used to indicate personality type. The usefulness of considering personality type, as Margaret explained, was to help people understand that there were preferred modes – of thinking, working, problem-solving, expressing oneself, etc. – and that individuals in the workplace had different but equally acceptable modes and skills. For example extroverts could learn that introverts might need space and quietness to do their best thinking, and that there was nothing wrong with that. This turned out to be an interesting point in the ATO because the prevailing work structure was

very noisy, everyone being expected to work in modules of four, so that people were speaking all the time. Using the Myers-Briggs Scale, it was discovered that 75% of participants were introverts who really could not do their deep thinking in a gang, but needed to get away on their own in order to think.

I recalled how Margaret had always tried to vary her teaching approach in an effort to cater for every possible learning style in her students. She commented that, in her experience all good teachers did use all the different modes, but that the work of Neurolinguistic Programming and of the Myers- Briggs Scale revealed convincingly how important it was to do this.

Jean made the following comments about Margaret's qualities as a teacher: "I think one of Margaret's best gifts as a teacher is that she really makes each person feel very important, so if they make an oral contribution, whatever it is, Margaret can pick up on it and develop it and show its value, so that person really feels appreciated – that they've made a valuable contribution. And I think that's a thing that teachers often don't do – because, you know, they're preoccupied with what they want to get across, what they want to happen in the classroom and they tend to just pass over things like that . So – I try not to do that now. I try to take up on what people give, and show that it's valuable."

I then asked Margaret about what she had learnt from observing Jean's teaching and she made the following remarks: "Well, first of all – I think the first thing about Jean is that she's very logical, so that when she plans – she's also very creative – so when she puts together a program, it's not only new and innovative, but it's very logically planned. And she doesn't jump stages, or – she's very, very skilled at providing material that's exactly the right level – and I think I'm a bit slapdash, and sometimes I present stuff that's much too hard, or not quite at the right level. I'm inclined to go in much too hard, and not realise that there's vocab. that's too difficult, something like that. Whereas Jean'll always – she really prepares well and reads through and thinks about her audience. So, I think her planning makes a very, very big difference to the calibre of her delivery, because it's always spot on. And also, I think Jean's very good at going through a stage of a lesson – thinking of very many different ways of reinforcing something if it obviously hasn't quite stuck with everybody. So that she doesn't just present something and leap

on, and presume that people that haven't quite caught up will scramble and somehow find their way. She'll think of another exercise and get the group to work through that.

It gives the class a quiet confidence about their ability – because after working with her for several weeks, they know that they're not going to be put into somewhere where they've got to do something that's hideously difficult and be left to scramble. And they know that the material is going to be challenging, because the level's always – the passage we're working from, or whatever, has usually got some intrinsic interest for them and the vocab.'s pitched at exactly the right level. So things like that. I learnt a lot about being more careful and just thinking a bit more in my planning about the actual content."

I asked what she would do if she found that a passage was too difficult, and she said:"Well, you're best not to use it if it's too difficult! Well, I think, if you choose a passage and it's got probably about eight or ten words that are too difficult, you're getting to the outer limits and you probably should drop it and go and have a look in the paper and see if you can find something that's equally as interesting and just that much simpler. And I often get seduced by something that interests *me*, and I think *they* 'll be interested in it, but in actual fact it's too damn hard. You know, it's an Age level vocab. instead of The Sun. And I think I do that quite a lot."

(Jean) "But also, Marg *inspires* the students. Everything she teaches seems so interesting and exciting, you know, that they're all – sucked in!" (laughter)

(LW) "That's a great gift. I guess most teachers would wish they had that."

(Jean) "Yes".

EPILOGUE

As Margaret was recounting what she had learnt from watching Jean, she remarked that if she was lucky enough to get better from cancer she would be putting all these principles into practice when she got back to her classes. It was characteristic of her professional approach that she was always seeking to learn and develop as a teacher. She had a very theoretical approach, (she read widely in different areas) but all that

impressed her, whether in reading, in lectures or in the ideas of colleagues, she would adapt for classroom use in the interests of advancing her students.

The paper has touched upon some of the guiding principles of her work, such as needs- based, learner-centred approaches to program development, the integrating of general communicative and work-specific language needs, the development of the individual learner as a whole person, the involvement of managers (and experts generally) in programs, task-based learning and behavioural goals, and the interests of the workplace as a whole.

Some of these principles influence all good workplace ESL instructors, as Margaret would have been the first to say, but she brought an enthusiastic commitment and a quality to their implementation which won enormous respect and admiration from students, managers and colleagues who worked with her. One of her most outstanding qualities, in my view, was the ability to consider many pedagogical issues simultaneously, and to incorporate them all effectively and in a stimulating manner, within the confines of a workplace program. Beyond this, it is true to say that there were some aspects of workplace teaching which she developed to a quite outstanding level, and in which her contribution to workplace ESL was not only distinguished but truly original. (See Appendix D for comment by EWP colleagues.)

Those of us who were privileged to work with Margaret will remember the high- calibre of her professional work. We will also remember a lively, fun-loving, warm-hearted and appreciative friend. As colleague and friend she is sorely missed.

APPENDIX A
PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE
COMMENTS FROM EMPLOYEES

(Collected by Margaret from interviews or conversations)

1. Plastic Press Operator

I understand 50% of the news. I don't have enough English to be able to speak at school meetings. I'm not able to use the telephone properly. If I knew more I could ask my supervisor to put me in an office job. I have RSI.

2. Tradesperson, 2nd Class

If people speak quickly I have trouble writing their names. I understand about 40% on the phone and it's difficult for me when the "charge" is not there. I'd like to know the names of my tools. I'd like to be able to speak at the same level in English as I can in my language but it's difficult because there's no one to correct me.

3. Tradesperson, 2nd Class

I can't use English on the telephone. It's sometimes hard to speak to the doctor. I can understand about 20% of the news. I'd like to be able to understand when the boss talks about the job.

4. Engraver, 1st Class

It's hard for me to fill out forms. I would have trouble with a P400 and I can't do my own tax form. I don't think my pronunciation is correct and I don't know enough words. I can understand 80% of the news but it's harder on the telephone. I had trouble understanding the first aid course.

5. Polisher, 1st Class

I understand 25-30% at safety meetings and about 20% of the news. If people speak quickly or it's a big message I can't understand. I need more

English to help myself to get promotion. I'm already a first class polisher. If I had English I could become a boss.

6. Hand set Assembler

I used to have a good mind but often I am frightened to do things for myself such as talking on the telephone. Understand about 20% on the phone, 30% of the news and 80% of safety talks. I mix things on the phone and feel shy. I'd like to learn to read - I can read about 40%.

7. Senior Polisher

I need English for many things in Australia. When we meet Australian people and they speak to us in some ways we miss it and we don't want to miss anything. We live in a country where English is the only language so we must learn this language.

8. Painter

When the boss is away I need English and when I want to "catch the job". I need it for the family so I can explain papers before I sign. I understand 50% of the news, 75% on the telephone and I'm okay on safety. I can understand 60% of what the teachers say - my girl helps me. If my supervisor speaks fast I have to ask him to speak slower or explain.

9. Welder

I see words in the paper and I don't know how to write them or pronounce them. Sometimes I feel nervous when I ring up because I don't know if I can pronounce the words properly. If people know me on the phone they understand me but if I have to make an appointment or ask for something they can't understand because of "the pronounce" the words. I understand 75% of the news. I'm okay on safety.

10. Production Assistant, Grade 1

I understand 25-30% of the news and 50% of the telephone calls at work. I want to take promotion and I need English to take in more knowledge.

I need to communicate more so I can do different jobs (be more flexible). With more English I can give back my knowledge.

11. Sheet Metal Tradesman

I understand 50% of safety talks or maybe less and 50% of telephone calls. I can't "fix" my words to ask questions. I was a foreman at Philips but not here because it would be too much to write, read and speak. It's hard - I want to speak nice to people but I speak rough. I want to read a paper and I'd like to know everything on the drawings at work (plans). I have to go to a friend or a boss. I can't read notices for workers or things on the wall.

12. Engineer

I write about 50 minutes every day but not much. I need spelling and grammar. Engineers are supposed to handle a lot of correspondence and writing - still I have problems. If I learn to speak properly I will be more effective. I will be able to communicate more in groups. When I try to communicate with people some try to understand but when some see me in difficulty they stop listening and there is a break in the communication.

APPENDIX B
ENGLISH ON THE JOB
REPORT ON COURSE HELD AT IVANHOE DISTRICT - TELECOM AUSTRALIA

Teacher: Margaret Howell
Adult Migrant Education Services

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1. INTRODUCTION

This pilot course was part of Telecom Victoria's Affirmative Action Program. It was organised and set up by a tripartite steering committee which represented Telecom, The Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union, and Adult Migrant Education Services. Staff involved were from the Coburg and Ivanhoe Districts, Operations Branch, in Telecom Victoria.

1.1 Course Schedule

The 100 hour course was conducted over a 12 week period from 28th May to 15th August 1986. Class sessions were held every morning of the working week from 8.30am to 10.30am. All staff involved had a rostered day off on the Monday after pay day.

1.2 Course Location

Classes were held in the Conference Room on the First Floor in the Ivanhoe District Telecom Office, 62 Upper Heidelberg Road, Heidelberg.

1.3 Pre Course Promotion

a. Prior to the course, the APTU contacted its members in Coburg and Ivanhoe Districts and recommended participation in the project.

b. The steering committee wrote to all staff in both districts informing them of the availability of classes. Information was translated for those using English as a second language.

c. Equal Employment Opportunity Officers, Leigh Anderson (Coburg) and Cathie Woods (Ivanhoe) actively promoted the program in their respective districts.

Interested staff contacted their union and/or their local management.

2. SELECTION PROCEDURES

In total, 63 staff applied for English classes. Each was individually interviewed and tested in order to establish their needs and speaking.

listening, reading and writing skill levels in English. The test instrument used was The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR).

2.1 Selection Criteria

The thirteen men on this course all expressed a preference for a writing class. Although ASLPR speaking and listening levels varied from 1+ to 3, most of the group were able to communicate well in a familiar situation. However, when faced with the task of contributing their ideas at meetings or in an interview, many lacked the skill and/or confidence to do so. Everyone was concerned about his limited vocabulary, poor grammar and incorrect word order.

Typical of the comments made at the interviews was, "I don't speak at meetings. If you have the words to say, you still think you don't do it properly - the explanation you know". (sic).

Each man could read a simple newspaper item but would have difficulty comprehending complicated technical data or longer items in the newspaper. ASLPR reading levels varied from 1 to 3.

All of those selected had difficulty writing. No one in the group had reached a level of survival proficiency. They were frequently unable to fill forms accurately, write fault reports and messages. No one in the group could write a letter. ASLPR Writing levels ranged from 1- to 1. (See Ingram (1984) on ASLPR. An example of the rating levels and explanation of skills related to ratings, as used by AMES instructors, is provided at the end of this report - LW).

3 SETTING UP THE COURSE

The District Telecom Manager, Mr. Ron Riseley, oversaw the running of the program in Ivanhoe. He demonstrated an active interest in the progress of the class and assisted the teacher on many occasions. The success of the course owes much to his co-operation and enthusiasm.

Ms. Cathie Wood, EEO Officer, Ivanhoe, was responsible for arranging the release of staff to attend classes. Where necessary, she organised taxis to transport the men from their depots to the district office. She booked accommodation and provided stationery. Throughout the

course she liaised with the teacher and assisted with the day-to-day running of the program. Her contribution to the course is much appreciated.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of this course resulted from consideration of the needs of the participants primarily as expressed by themselves. The teacher and one of the Senior Lines Officers also recommended several items for inclusion in the curriculum.

The broad aim was to develop writing and spelling skills and to increase learners' confidence to undertake tasks which involve written communication.

Specific course objectives were set as a result of initial negotiations carried out in the first week and also through ongoing consultation.

4.1 Setting Specific Course Objectives

In the first week the class divided into three groups. Each group was asked to:

i. consider when learners would like to write English.
ii. decide which skills would need to be developed to enable them to do this.
iii. list all activities which could be undertaken to learn such skills.

The items were written on the whiteboard. Each man was asked to select the four activities which he most wanted included in the program. These were listed in priority order. The results were then tabulated and used as an outline of the course syllabus. Specific course objectives were a direct outcome of both this and later consultation.

4.2 Course Objectives

Specific objectives included the following that most of those who completed the course would be able to do:

1. Set out and write a variety of letters including a letter to

accompany a cheque, a formal letter of complaint and a letter of appreciation.

2. Comprehend the general terms used in form filling.
3. Confidentially and accurately fill a number of forms such as Application for Leave (P66V), Application for Promotion and Transfer (P905), Application for a Bank Loan, Application for Admission to a Hospital, The Census.
4. Understand the structure of the English sound system.
5. Know the basic spelling rules and be able to spell many regular words.
6. Write many words which are related to form filling, fault reports and the taking of messages.
7. Write a brief message.
8. Use a sequence to report about the past, e.g. first we checked the manhole for gas, then we inspected all the cables etc.; first we flew to Sydney, then we caught a plane to Rome, after that ... etc.
9. Correctly use regular and irregular past tense verbs in spoken and written communications.
10. Use present continuous and past continuous verbs to describe what is happening or has happened, e.g. when I was loading the truck, the lid of the manhole slipped, fell onto a rock and cracked.
11. Use an extended vocabulary to communicate ideas.
12. Have the confidence to contribute at meetings.
13. Ask questions in order to

    a. start conversations
    b. gain information
    c. clarify a situation.

Note: Although general English skills were the top priority on this course, the participants often asked for work related exercises.

5 *CURRICULUM*

The components of the curriculum directly reflect the objectives of the program.

Improvement of general writing skills was a top priority. Many of

the activities included in the curriculum allowed the group to practise grammatical structures essential for good communication. A theme such as 'write about a room from your past' ensured that the group would use some of the past tense verbs which they had been learning.

Many topics and themes were based on personal experience. The book, 'For a Better Life We came', which contains the oral histories of Italians and Greeks living in the Brunswick area, was used as a starting point for stories based on old photographs.

Letter writing formed another important element in the syllabus. The group learned how to set out a letter and write letters to accompany cheques, letters of request, letters of complaint, and of appreciation. Where possible, real letters were written and posted, e.g. to thank the APTU for their gift of books.

In response to the learners' request, many sessions were spent on spelling and dictation. Words used to demonstrate a given spelling rule were chosen because of their usefulness for the group. Thus, dictation planned to practise regular spelling of the long vowel sounds would be more likely to be, 'take this wire to the mainframe', than 'the cat ran up the lane'. Supervisors who visited the classroom often contributed authentic language used in the workplace.

Many of the sentences needed for the Leave Form and for messages were printed onto cards. The men worked in pairs dictating sentences to their partner. Once all the words were known, this would be recorded on a logsheet and a new, possibly more complex card would be selected. This procedure allowed for variations in learning rates and encouraged autonomous learning.

The general terminology used on a variety of forms was introduced. Where possible, real forms were used, e.g. Income Tax Return Form S, National Australia Bank Rapid Response Bank Loan Forms, Application for Admission to the Eye and Ear Hospital, and the Application for Leave P66V. Many of the group expressed their satisfaction and pleasure at being able to complete the Census by themselves. Senior Lines Officer, Neil Jordan, instructed the class on how to fill the Mechanical Aids Maintenance and Operating Report, E294.

Many of the activities in the classroom provided practice in speaking in front of an audience, e.g. each man took a turn to speak about the town of his birth and referred to a large detailed map of Italy

generously donated by the Italian Cultural Institute. Such an activity provided incidental teaching opportunities. The teacher constantly reinforced the concept that each man had sufficient vocabulary and language skill to be able to participate in everyday conversations and at meetings. Post course evaluation procedures demonstrate that many of those on the course gained considerable confidence in this area.

Newspaper articles proved to be a valuable source of new vocabulary. New words were later incorporated into games and class exercises to ensure that they would be anchored into the long-term memory. The participants were delighted when they began to tune into the language being used outside the classroom. They frequently commented about hearing new vocabulary in conversations at the depot and in the media. They were surprised how often words such as *despite*, *blustery* and *launch* come up.

Visitors

The District Manager, Ron Riseley, visited the class on many occasions and took a personal interest in the progress of the students. He provided invaluable support to the teacher and spoke to the group about issues of particular interest or concern. Mr. Riseley arranged for Personnel Manager, Sue Mountain, to speak about opportunities for promotion and related procedures. Eight Lines Officers and many senior managers in the Ivanhoe District visited the classroom.

The Administration Manager, Robert Coggan, spoke to the men about his earlier life in the Alice Springs area. His talk led to many interesting comparisons between Europe and Australia and formed the basis of several writing activites.

The Manager of the Vision 2000 Implementation Team in Victoria, Ms Angela Chambers, explained the relevance of the project to staff and her hopes for the future. Her provocative talk caused much discussion and the examination of the roles of migrant workers in the organisation.

Dr. Lynn Wales visited the class on several occasions and prepared the group for post course evaluation procedures.

Mr. Sandy Doull, Occupational Health and Safety Officer, APTU, and Noel Kinniburgh, Organiser APTU Victoria, also called in to welcome the group and check on their progress. On one occasion, Sandy

presented the book, "The Immigrants", by Lowenstein and Loh, to each member of the class.

6. VALIDATION

This included:

1. Pre and post course comments by the participants.
2. Post course questionnaire.
3. Pre and post course writing samples.
4. Teacher's comments.
5. Commitment to further study.
6. Evaluation procedures by Dr. Wales, Management and the APTU. (These are documented in separate reports.)

6.1 Pre Course Comments

Almost everyone mentioned the difficulties they had experienced when faced with a writing task. They spoke of problems with form filling, fault reports, banking and letter writing. Many mentioned their limited training and promotion opportunities. Comments included, "I went to Training School at Tooronga and the teachers dictated information, there is the problem", "I want to do a jointing course but I'm too embarrassed". An LS2 who clearly was a natural leader and an excellent and experienced operator mentioned his dilemma, "The paperwork. I don't know where to start!". Some were concerned about having to rely on customers to write down what work had been carried out or having to drive back to their depot to get help from a supervisor. Others explained how difficult it was having to ask family members to help out at home.

6.2 Post Course Comments

These comments were taped in the last weeks of the course. The speakers frequently cited their increased confidence, their need for further tuition and their gratitude to all concerned with the delivery of the program.

An installer said, "I am here to learn this English class which they

give me a lot of confidence to the customer, to talk freely which I couldn't have this before, because what I had before, I had a bag over my head. I couldn't speak in the proper way. I couldn't write you know, one word. Now I can write. I can leave a message, you know, if I had to, to the boss, to the customer and they give me a lot of confidence even to understand more English. So only one thing I would say - maybe 100 hours is not enough to give me more skill and more confidence to write 100%, but what now in this few 100 hours - they are a lot easier to write and now I can leave a message, write a letter, even if not 100% in the right way but I do my best I could - and so if they give another thing, another chance to go higher to get a bit of promotion to penman or even cable assigner - so I can do the job better for Telecom, better for the customer. For we have to be specially (you know my job is installer) I have to be more freely with the customer, more gentle and I know the way I have to talk. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank you Telecom to putting this thing for us .... thank you very much all of you".

A Technical Assistant who had been working at the same job for fourteen years spoke of his hopes for change and gave advice to other staff overseas.

"For me it's really helpful. On this 100 hours English course I learned a fair bit English on writing skill and reading - a lot of spelling too. I like to tell it's a big help for my job too. I hope in the future I'll be going for promotion or a better job ..... This is a good encouragement for anybody who doesn't speak and doesn't know much English. Please don't stay behind. Go towards and try. We here in Australia need the English. I believe it's a good thing for Telecom or our personal interest."

A linesman who had less English than the others said, "I like this here English course because I will be very confident now than before on spelling and writing. Some, but not a lot but very well in some case - to spell the street when my boss ring me up - and I feel very comfortable now than before". This was the first time that this man had been able to accurately pronounce the names of letters in the alphabet. This enabled him to confidently handle the exchange of customers' names and addresses.

Many of the group were pleased about their increased independence. "Before I came here I could not write English and since I started the course I did learn a lot. Especially 30 years that I'm in Australia

I never ever filled Census Form before. I'm very pleased and I'm very proud that for the first time I was able to do it and I presented it without any error whatsoever".

6.3 Post Course Questionnaire (completed) on Last Day of Course

Results

A. Course Content

Each person ranked elements of the course according to their usefulness. The following list is in priority order from most popular to least popular: General Writing, Spelling, Form Filling, Grammar, Letter Writing, Speaking, Reading, Vocabulary Extension, Report Writing.

B. Pacing

Nine persons felt the pace of the course had suited them, three said it was sometimes all right and the staff member who had never attended English classes before said it was too fast.

C. New Skills

In response to the question, 'What will you try to do now that you didn't have the confidence to do before (a) at work, and (b) at home?'.

a. At Work. Four persons mentioned their increased confidence to speak to supervisors and to discuss problems arising in the workplace. Three said that they would be able to explain more accurately to customers about work being carried out.
Eight of the group mentioned form filling and four said that they were more confident about writing fault reports. One man mentioned taking messages and five noted spelling and increased confidence to handle paperwork.

b. At Home. Many of the group indicated that they were prepared to read and write letters, to complete their own forms and generally to be more independent.

D. Improved Skills

SKILL	A LOT BETTER	BETTER	A BIT BETTER	NO CHANGE
SPELLING	10	3		
FORM FILLING	3	9	1	
LETTER WRITING	1	5	7	
ASKING QUESTIONS	2	8	3	
SPEAKING AT MEETINGS	4	3	6	
USING THE PAST TENSE	4	7	2	
REPORTING INFORMATION	4	5	4	

E. Feelings about Communicating in English

Five men felt a lot more confident, seven felt more confident and one felt a bit more confident.

6.4 Pre and Post Course Writing Samples

The writing samples from the pre course interviews indicate a wide variation in skill levels. Everyone in the group could write some words but no one was able to correctly spell and write two sentences about what they had done the night before. Many were unable to complete a simple form and did not know terms such as *marital status* and *dependants*. No one in this group could write a witness report about how an accident had occurred. The following sample indicated the problems of using an Italian sound system to write English words.

> "lust mat I went home aft work end I heve cup coffe with may waf e den I plant sum vegge".

The next sample shows the response of the writer when asked to invite someone to a meal.

> Dir Barni, cud iu please cam tomorrow for diner at my plaese with iou wife and cildren iou faithfuli ...

By the end of the course everyone could spell most of the words they needed for the Application for Leave Form. This involved a large amount of vocabulary. They could accurately complete these and fill up other forms used in the community although some errors still occurred.

Everyone in the group had improved their word attack skills although many irregular words needed for various communications still caused problems, e.g. through, hydraulic, guard, neighbour.

Because of their improved spelling and increased confidence, these staff indicated that they were more willing to undertake writing tasks and seek guidance and/or information from others, e.g. filling the Mechanical Aids Operating and Maintenance Reports with details of condition of equipment rather than just writing a tick; writing own description of work carried out for a customer rather than driving back to the depot between jobs to get a supervisor to do this or having to ask the customer to do it.

Even though some mistakes still occurred, each man had the ability and skill to set up and write a variety of letters.

Writing samples at the end of the course showed greater use of correct past tense verbs, more correct spelling, use of appropriate articles and complexity.

6.5 Teacher's Report

All of those who visited the classroom commented on the enthusiasm of the men. Many of the group arrived half an hour before the commencement of class sessions and took the opportunity to work individually or in pairs on a writing task. Exercises were frequently completed or rewritten at home.

A number of the men came into class despite illness and visits from overseas relatives. One person missed seven sessions through injury and illness and another lost three sessions due to an important work commitment. Pietro Giusatto took a few days leave to play in the Australian Bocce championships in Adelaide. He cut his leave short to return to class.

Many of the men mentioned that this was the first course in which they had made real progress. This was due to a large extent to the fact that the group were well matched in ability, shared the same needs, and had sufficient time in 100 hours to achieve many of the course objectives and to consolidate learning.

Inspection of post course questionnaires shows that most of the learners felt more confident about their English. Their ratings indicate that everyone felt better about all their writing skills. There was a particularly positive response to the question, "Do you feel better about speaking at meetings?". This is indicative of the steady increase in recognition of the skills and knowledge owned by individuals within the group.

As the classes progressed, attitude changes became noticeable. The staff were particularly impressed with the frank exchange of ideas with the District Manager, Administration Manager, EEO Officer and Angela Chambers. They began to review their contribution to the organisation, their role in achieving Telecom's aims and objectives and their opportunities for training and promotion. This resulted in many discussions, the examination of the place of migrants in Telecom and the airing of old grievances. Ron Riseley spoke on several occasions about the rights of all staff in the Commission and in the Ivanhoe and Coburg Districts. One outcome of this course was that many of the men realised that they had the capability to learn and that with greater communication skills they could consider applying for higher positions and other courses alongside Australian born workers.

At this stage everyone on this course needs to continue to develop and practise their English language skills. They need to learn more vocabulary, particularly that which is related to technical aspects of the job. They need to study more complex grammatical structures and to learn how to spell irregular words which are needed for everyday living. They would benefit from instruction in how to complete paperwork related to their area, e.g. Accident Reports (P400).

Commitment to further study. All of the group were aware that they had made an important step in the right direction but now needed to enrol in further classes. Eleven of the thirteen men asked to be referred to other programs available out in the community.

This preparedness to study English in the evening is directly related to the fact that these staff have been empowered by the course. They now realise that they have the ability to learn the language of their adopted country and that when they are able to communicate effectively they will have access to equal employment opportunity. They need encouragement and support to continue.

7. *PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED*

7.1 Pre Course Preparation

Because insufficient time was available for the teacher to select staff to suit local management and their allocation of manpower, work centres were disrupted. As a result, many supervisors were annoyed about releasing their staff and did not support the program. On many occasions there were comments such as, 'You've come back to do half a day's work for a whole day's pay'. Understandably this did not assist the learners who felt threatened and upset. Ron Riseley visited the classroom several times to explain that as this was a pilot program, such problems were bound to occur and blame should not fall on any particular group.

As there was only one day's preparation for the course, the teacher did not attend the supervisor briefing session and did not visit depots because of her other commitments. This made it difficult for her to organise visits of local management to the classroom, decreased the valuable contribution which such staff could have made to the program, and cut down support needed by participants.

7.2 Accommodation

The conference room at Ivanhoe does not comfortably accommodate 14 persons for two hours. After about ten minutes, the doors must be opened to allow sufficient ventilation. In the stuffy conditions, colds and infections quickly spread through the group. At one stage half the group were ill - although they continued to come in for sessions. With the door of the classroom open, both the DTM, his senior staff, and administrative personnel were disturbed. Privacy for the students and group work were impossible in this situation. On the other hand, the location of the room in the midst of District administrative personnel encouraged many staff to take an interest in proceedings. Instant experts were on hand literally outside the classroom door and the barriers between the workers on course and senior management were broken down. The availability of a photocopier beside the room was invaluable.

7.3 Limited Supervisor Visits

Many supervisors did not visit the class. Those who did tended to come in the last few weeks. This was frequently commented on by the participants who were proud of their work and keen to refute the label of "bludger". They wanted to show what they were doing and how useful this was for their job. They felt that refusal to accept invitations were indicative of the attitude of certain supervisors.

Those Senior Lines Officers who did eventually come often rapidly changed their minds about the value of the program and made useful contributions and suggestions about course content (e.g. Mech Aids Reports). Their staff also commented on the welcome support and change of attitude back in the workplace.

ASLPR: Description of Levels 1- to 1+ in Reading (R) and Writing (W)	
General Description	Examples of specific tasks (ESL)
W:1 – Elementary proficiency Able to write with reasonable accuracy short words and brief familiar utterances. Where the language has an alphabet, can form all letters; can write with reasonable phonetic and formal accuracy basic personal details and the names of everyday objects. Can write a short simple sentence or brief instruction relating to matters in areas of immediate need or with which he or she is very familiar.	Can write short familiar words with reasonable accuracy though may need to sound them out. Can write a phrase or short sentence (not necessarily accurately) to give basic details about self and family, to reply to a query, or to convey simple information (e.g. to identify a photograph of a familiar scene). Can copy short written sentences (e.g. giving directions how to go from X to Y).
R:1 - Elementary proficiency Able to read short simple sentences and short instructions. Can recognise and name most of the letters of the printed alphabet (both upper and lower case if found in the language). Can read short, original sentences of one clause on familiar topics. Fluency is restricted by syntactic knowledge, vocabulary, cultural knowledge and inability to handle longer sentences or the discourse structure of even short texts. Silent reading may be accompanied by oral recoding. Word recognition may depend heavily on sounding out the letters. Aware of the more frequent sound-symbol correspondences, but errors will still occur frequently.	Can identify and read aloud common words (e.g. names of shops and every-day objects). Can read aloud with reasonable accuracy words containing familiar sound-symbol correspondences, though stress patterns may be faulty. Can comprehend short written directions (e.g. to go from X to Y) or simple one-sentence instructions (e.g. arranging time and place to meet). Can understand common abbreviations in daily usage such as Mr, Mrs, a.m., and p.m.

General Description	Examples of specific tasks
W:1 Minimum survival proficiency Able to satisfy basic survival needs. Can write all letters of the alphabet and copy most sentences accurately. Can write personal details and a short series of sentences about things that are familiar (not necessarily formal accuracy in lexis and syntax but comprehensibly). Longer utterances or longer series of utterances tend to lose coherence.	Can fill in uncomplicated forms with personal details (name, with address, nationality, marital status). Can write simple sentences, including brief instructions (e.g. to door-to-with door vendors). Can copy from written script quite accurately the sorts of information indicated in R:1. Can copy down, when presented orally, name, address, appointment and simple directions. Can fill out bank deposit and withdrawal forms. Can produce a short series of simple sentences on a familiar topic (e.g. personal details for a job application, short simple narration of an everyday occurrence, postcard).
R:1 Minimum survival proficiency Able to read personal and place names, street signs, office and shop designations, numbers, isolated words and phrases, and short sentences. Can recognise and name all the letters in the printed version of the alphabet (both upper and lower case if found in the alphabet). Can read simple sentences with ease, but may have difficulty with sentences of greater complexity. Can read and comprehend (but not necessarily fluently) very short, syntactically simple texts concerning his everyday life, but has considerable	Can read uncomplicated forms requiring basic personal details (name, address, nationality, marital status) but will require help in comprehending others. Can comprehend short, high frequency traffic signs, shop designations, bus and train destinations, basic timetables, and common English language menus. From lists (e.g. street directory, index) can isolate the information required. Can use the 'Yellow Pages' to find a tradesman. Can read a notice

General Description	Examples of specific tasks
difficulty in comprehending texts with more complex discourse structure.	for a function and identify the nature, name, location, date and time of the event. Can read a short series of simple sentences narrating an everyday event. Can comprehend and act on a short series of simple instructions for using an everyday object (provided they do not contain unfamiliar specialist vocabulary).
W:1+ - Survival proficiency	
Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social needs. Can write a sufficiently wide range of informal language to satisfy survival needs though errors in syntax, spelling and style may frequently interfere with comprehension. Can write most words and sentences that can br produced orally but longer utterances and texts may lack coherence through a failure to maintain sentence structure, to structure the thought sequence acceptably, or to use discourse markers appropriately. Has the ability to use a bilingual dictionary to check spelling. Aware of but not confident with the formal devices used in writing letters and has limited ability to vary them to match different recipients.	Can write a simple covering letter (e.g. to accompany a cheque or a completed job application form). Can convey a simple message by telegram (e.g. accepting job offered) though the conventions and form may often be inappropriate. Can write a note to school explaining a child's absence or requesting leave for the child. Can take down a simple messagein note form.

General Description	Examples of specific tasks
R:1+ - Survival proficiency	
Able to read short texts on subjects related to his immediate needs. Ready comprehension is conditional on the meaning being clearly spelt out. Can follow a simple compound or complex sentence, but has little ability to handle many discourse markers commonly used in the written registers. With some use of a bilingual dictionary can read for pleasure simplified versions of standard texts. Word attack is now sufficiently developed for the learner to be able to recognise most words in oral vocabulary though silent letters, non-phonetic forms or other irregularities may still cause confusion. Where texts are in cursive writing, copes only if the writing is neat and the style familiar.	Can understand a simple circular sent home from school on a familiar topic (e.g. start of swimming season), or on an unfamiliar topic (e.g. an excursion), provided that some prior explanation has been given. Using a bilingual dictionary can read a popular novel or short story simplified for L2 learners. Can comprehend texts in which discourse is marked by simple features. Can follow the instructions on a public telephone provided such words as *dial tone* and *receiver* are familiar. Can discriminate between widely differing letters such as an apparently personalised sales promotion and correspondence requiring action (e.g. overdue account or alteration to delivery routine) even if neither is fully understood. Can understand straightforward classified advertisements in which the information is directly stated, which do not use unfamiliar registers, contain a high degree of abbreviation, or depend significantly on the learner's ability to supply implied meaning (e.g. as in innuendo).

APPENDIX C
COMMENTS BY STUDENTS ON THE IVANHOE COURSE (FROM WALES 1986)

LW. What sort of problems did you have at work or outside work, that made you decide "Yes, I want to do an English class"?

S1. Speaking with the boss, speaking with customers. I couldn't talk properly in English, plus when I had to talk with someone in English I was scared and I couldn't write my own letters.

LW. Can you tell me of a problem you had with customers before, when speaking to them ?

S1. Lots of problems, because when I used to talk with a customer they would say "Who are you?" and I used to be scared to answer back because I didn't know what to say, instead now I feel more confident and I have more manners ...

LW. Can you tell me something you can do now or that you try to do now that you couldn't do before?

S2. I couldn't fill in my sick form, now I can do it myself, before I had to go to my boss, and another thing, I can ring the depot when I have to change my job from one depot to the other, now I spell the address and not have any problem.

LW. How do you feel about that?

S2. More confident, even when communicating with a customer you can explain things better. The course has been very helpful ...

LW. Has anybody said anything to you since you've been doing the course, outside of work, that your English has improved?

S3. Yes, my wife has said that my English has improved, all the thanks goes to Margaret because she has really tried to help us in which we admire very much.

S4. Fortunately, my daughter is a school teacher, and she has seen an improvement in my English.

S5 My children have noticed an improvement in English. Now I can understand what they say when they talk to each other. I can also read the newspaper a bit better than before and understand it.

S6. I used to write notes for school for my daughter in Italian because I couldn't write in English, now since the course I can

manage to write the notes in English, even her teacher is surprised ...

LW. So you think now that you have much more confidence to understand when they are having an industrial negotiation?

All. Yes, definitely.

S7. You have more confidence to answer back because we know what we want to say, before we just used to listen.

LW. Has the course given you more confidence in advancement in your work, such as trying for a promotion? Would you try now?

S8. Yes, because now I can write and apply for myself, before I had problems when applying for a job and now I can read the Gazette better.

LW. So even if you don't get a promotion at least you can apply?

S8. Yes ...

S9. Anyway today is the last day of our course and we would like to thank yourself, Margaret and a special thanks to all our bosses, especially Ron Riseley and Robert Coldham, especially the way they treated us they were like two brothers, not like District Managers, they joined along with us and helped us and they deserve many thanks.

APPENDIX D

A TRIBUTE FROM COLLEAGUES IN EWP VICTORIA.

Our dear friend and colleague, Margaret Howell, who died on 3rd September 1992 after a long and valiant battle with cancer, was one of the pioneers of the Victorian EWP program. Her enthusiasm for every aspect of her work put her at the forefront of AMES industry involvement. Many of the projects that she designed and conducted subsequently became common practice in EWP. Those of us who were privileged to see her teach consider her to be the most outstanding teacher we have known.

As friends we miss her warmth and vitality; as colleagues we miss her inspiration and support. She will long remain in our memories.

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